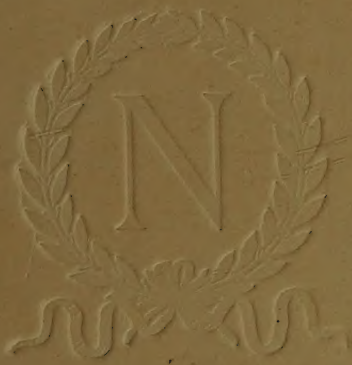


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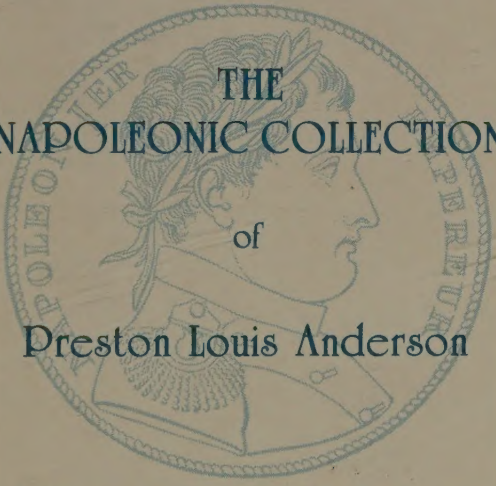
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SAINT HELENA

LITTLE ISLAND

Translated from the Russian of

M. A. ALDANOV

by A. E. CHAMOT

New York

ALFRED · A · KNOPF

1924

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Published, February, 1924

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NOTE

In Napoleon's school copy-book of the year 1788 (Fonds Libre No. 11), compiled from the courses of geography of Abbé Lacroix, the future Emperor had written with his own hand the following words: "Sainte Hélène, petite île" (Saint Helena, little island). *At that point the entries in the copy-book are broken off.*



CHAPTER ONE

One day, in her early childhood, Susie Johnson was told by her mother that henceforth there would be no pudding for dinner. Susie began to cry bitterly.

"My little darling," her mother said in a tender but instructive tone, "Betsy Brown and other little girls will also have no pudding. We must bear it, and economize. Bad Boney, who has introduced the Continental System into the Dear Old Country, is the cause of it all."

Susie asked, still shedding tears, what this new Continental System was. But Mrs. Johnson was not quite clear about it herself, and it appeared to the little girl that the Continental System was something resembling a long nasty snake.

In the evening, when Susie went to bed,

her mother told her to pray to the Lord to save the Dear Old Country from bad Boney, who had taken away from her and Betsy Brown and other little English girls the nice pudding with currants, plums, and sweet candied peel—probably in order to eat it all himself.

Miss Susie was afraid of bad Boney, and hated him more than anything else in the world. Whenever she was naughty, her mother and Miss Mary, her governess, said they would give her to Boney, and when they said it they made terrible eyes. It was one day at breakfast that Susie heard the name of Boney for the first time, and she asked with fear who Boney was.

"He is Satan himself!" her governess burst out, unable to restrain herself.

"Oh! Miss Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Johnson, who disliked improper words.

But her Daddy, Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, tearing himself away from the last number of the *Morning Post* and striking the table with his fist, declared categorically that Miss Mary was quite right. Boney was really "that damned devil." And when he said this, Lieutenant-

Colonel Johnson rolled his eyes, and drew out the letter D in the words "d—damned d—devil" in a most terrible manner.

It was only when Miss Susie had grown older, shortly before her eighth birthday, that she was told Boney was not just Boney, but that this was a nickname, somewhat as her cousin Edward Brown was called Eddy. She learned that bad Boney had another long and difficult name, Napoleon Bonaparte, and that he was the King George ("only King," her mother said smiling) of the French, who lived beyond the sea, ate frogs (shame!), and wanted to destroy the Dear Old Country, and were fighting dishonourably, like real Huns, and committing all sorts of brutalities.

Soon after this her Daddy, Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, was killed by bad Boney in the war, and still later pudding appeared again at dinner. When big people read the newspapers they talked very excitedly; it appeared that Boney's affairs were going badly; that he was being beaten by the Russians. Susie inquired

at once about the Russians, and learned with a certain amount of fear, but also with satisfaction, that they were a brave nation who lived in the midst of snow with bears and ate tallow candles; but that they loved the Dear Old Country, and did not love the damned Frenchmen. The Russian King Alexander, a distant relation of King George's, and a Russian Count whose name it was impossible either to pronounce or remember, had even set fire to their capital, Moscow, in order to burn Boney, who had managed to get there, and thus to gratify King George. This pleased Susie very much.

During the whole of her childhood Miss Susie heard almost daily of some of Boney's evil deeds. At last, one summer morning, her young cousin, Lieutenant Edward Brown, rushed into the house all beaming and decorated with glittering orders. In their happy and animated conversation he often pronounced the word Waterloo—and after a few minutes it was known to the whole house that the Duke of Wellington and Cousin Eddy had defeated Boney and revenged Daddy, and in

future the Dear Old Country had nothing more to fear. In the defeat of Boney, besides Eddy, the Germans had also taken part—they were a very nice people who, unlike the French, fought honourably and never committed any atrocities. But the Germans had helped only a very little, and everything of importance had been done by the dear old boys, the dear old Duke of Wellington, and chiefly by dear old Cousin Eddy.

After that, fate made many strange changes for Susie and her whole family. Sir Hudson Lowe, an ugly, unpleasant, military man, with a long upper lip and sharp chin, began to come very often to the house. He appeared to treat Mrs. Johnson with the greatest respect, and frequently remained with her alone of an evening. In the winter, after Cousin Eddy's return, Mrs. Johnson, blushing slightly, informed Susie and her younger sister that they were going to have a new Daddy, as she was about to get married to Sir Hudson. Miss Mary told the little girls, as a profound secret, that Sir Hudson came of an unimportant family, and that

he was as far removed from them as they were from the Duke of Norfolk, the first peer of the realm. But that did not matter, as Sir Hudson Lowe was a very good man and a celebrated general. At the same time they heard they were all going to remove to a distant island, called Saint Helena, which was very far away, and where their new Daddy had been appointed Governor. Bad Boney was already living on the island, and they were to guard him, and prevent him from running away and again killing Englishmen. Soon after they all made a very long voyage. They sailed for two and a half months across a great ocean in a large ship that had masts and guns and rolled terribly, and they were all very ill—but she alone was never ill at all—and at last they arrived at the Island of Saint Helena and went to a big house called Plantation House. The beautiful house and lovely gardens, with wonderful mimosas, pleased Susie very much. As soon as she had run through all the rooms, she asked in which of the cellars Boney was locked up and would it be possible to see him, if only

from a distance. But it appeared, to her great relief, that Boney was not in that house at all, but lived in quite another place, in the Villa Longwood, which was very far from Plantation House, and none of them, except Daddy, would ever see him either from near or far.

On the Island of Saint Helena, imperceptibly to all but herself, Susie changed from a little child into an enchanting girl. People said she was a beauty. She was in her sixteenth year, and already she was sometimes called Miss Susanna, when Count Alexander de Balmain, the representative of the Russian Emperor on the Island of Saint Helena, fell in love with her and proposed to her.

Susie saw her future husband for the first time at a dinner party given by the Governor in honour of the three foreign commissioners. She noticed at once that De Balmain was a handsome man, much better-looking than the Austrian commissioner, Baron Stürmer, or the French one, Marquis de Montchenu. When the Negroes brought the candelabras into the drawing-room, Miss Susanna watched

with curiosity and a certain loathing, wondering what would happen, and she was quite prepared to see their Russian guest take one of the candles and eat it. But the Russian did not do so, and it even seemed to Miss Susanna that to all outward appearance Count de Balmain was a perfect gentleman.

During dinner the conversation was partly in French, partly in English. The Russian spoke very good English—with the Oxford accent, like Cousin Eddy. It is true Miss Susanna noticed at once that his Oxford pronunciation was not quite the same as Cousin Eddy's, and that the *th* had a strange sound. But for some reason this pleased her too. Count de Balmain spoke French quite wonderfully —Miss Susie was only able to express herself with difficulty in that language. It appeared to her that he spoke French better than the Marquis de Montchenu; the Marquis, however, was of a different opinion, and he listened with a certain irony to the truly Parisian burr of his Russian colleague.

The conversation turned, as usual, on

the subject of General Bonaparte, and on all the unpleasantness he continued to cause the whole world, and more especially to Sir Hudson Lowe and the foreign commissioners. Montchenu, an old émigré, who had formerly been considered extremely reactionary even in Coblence, related some circumstances that had happened in the Corsican's early years. It appears that in his youth Bonaparte had strangled a woman of light conduct with his own hands. The Marquis related this occurrence with the most positive indication of places, circumstances, names, and all the details of the murder.

"Quel scélérat, Seigneur, quel scélérat!" the Marquis exclaimed in conclusion.

Count de Balmain listened politely to the French commissioner, and then began in his turn to tell some anecdotes about Napoleon, but they were of quite another nature. It transpired that the Count, although he was a diplomat by profession, had gone through several campaigns; he held the rank of a colonel and was the possessor of many war decorations. De

Balmain mentioned this by the way, with a slight ironical smile on his lips, to show that he did not set any store by his warlike deeds—especially in the presence of such a renowned warrior as Sir Hudson Lowe. Count de Balmain had seen Napoleon only once in his whole life—and that was on the field of Waterloo. By order of the Emperor Alexander he had been attached to the Commander-in-Chief of the British army, and during the whole of that famous battle he had never left the suite of the Duke of Wellington for a moment. At the mention of Waterloo the faces of all the Englishmen and English ladies beamed with smiles, but Montchenu frowned slightly notwithstanding the natural hatred that he, as an émigré, had for Napoleon. De Balmain noted this at once and, turning towards the Marquis, he spoke in the highest terms of the bravery that the French army had displayed on the field of Waterloo.

"Bonaparte y a déployé tout son terrible génie, et Dieu sait s'il en a!"

Then he related in a masterly way how from the heights of Belle-Alliance Bona-

parte had directed the battle, which he had considered completely gained. Suddenly—it was about one o'clock—the Germans under Blücher appeared in his rear instead of Gruchy's French corps.

"Il faudrait la plume d'un Chateaubriand pour décrire le désespoir qui s'est peint alors sur la figure mobile de César."

It was thus that De Balmain finished his story. He had seen all this through his telescope. A silent grey-haired British officer, who was on a visit to the island, and who had received two wounds at Waterloo, had seen nothing of all this, and thought as he sat at table that the Russian staff officers must have had wonderful telescopes. But Miss Susanna was very much interested in the Russian's story. And what pleased her most was that during his narrative De Balmain had looked twice across the table to the side where only she and old Miss Mary were seated.

Sir Hudson Lowe remarked, with a smile, that the Battle of Waterloo would have been won by the English even if Blücher had not come to their aid.

"Hé, hé, qui sait, qui sait, mon général!" the Marquis exclaimed. "Quand on a affaire à l'armée française. . . ."

"Nous n'en sayons rien en effet," Baron Stürmer remarked from his place, "ces prafes allemands fous ont rendu un choli serfice."

De Balmain, to whom it was quite indifferent who had won the Battle of Waterloo—the English or the Germans—praised both Blücher and Wellington.

"Quel rude homme, votre Iron Duke!" he said to Sir Hudson, but instantly noticing the sour smile on the Governor's face, saw that he had made a mistake. Sir Hudson did not like Wellington, who had once called him an old fool. It is true, it was said in an undertone, but fairly distinctly. De Balmain quite agreed with this opinion of Sir Hudson's mental powers, but he thought in addition that Wellington was only slightly more clever than the Governor of Saint Helena. Wishing to rectify his blunder, he added with a smile that little foibles are inherent in great men: the conqueror of Waterloo was so desirous of resembling General

Bonaparte in every way that he had asked the famous David to paint his portrait and (here De Balmain looked again in the direction of Miss Susanna) he became very intimate with the singer Grassini. However, David refused to paint the Duke's portrait, and Madame Grassini is now fifteen years older than she was at the time of her intimacy with General Bonaparte.

The Marquis de Montchenu instantly called Grassini a rubbishy voiceless singer (in his day there were quite other singers at the Old Court), and he expressed his astonishment that His Majesty Louis XVIII when giving judgment on the crimes, which by the by he had no right to look into, had not ordered David to be hanged. Why, before Bonaparte's time had not this rascal painted portraits of Danton, Robespierre and Marat, and had he not been on friendly terms with all the revolutionary rabble?

Montchenu came of a very noble stock and was allied to both the French and Spanish royal families; for which reason, even in the presence of ladies, he permitted

himself to make use of the coarsest expressions, rightly supposing that with him they would not be set down to want of education.

To the general astonishment, the silent grey-headed officer joined in the conversation and said in English, looking coldly at the Marquis, that King Louis XVIII had probably not ordered Mr. David to be hanged, first, because in cultured countries people could be hanged only by order of a court of justice, and secondly, because all civilized people considered Mr. David a very great painter.

Baron Stürmer, with a sweet smile on his face, translated the observation the officer had made for the Marquis, who did not understand English. This was followed by a general silence, which was broken by De Balmain. He related in the same masterly fashion that when Danton was being driven to the scaffold, David, sitting on the balcony of the Café de la Régence, had drawn his figure seated on the tumbrel of the Paris executioner. Danton saw his former friend and cried

out to him in his prodigiously loud voice: "Varlet!"

"But of course," the Count added, "Monsieur is right: one must be indulgent with artists of genius."

Lady Lowe, noticing that the conversation was likely to take an unpleasant character, turned it on to the never-failing theme on which they were all of one mind. She began to speak about Bonaparte. Sir Hudson related that when first he had come to the Island of Saint Helena, he had tried in vain to establish friendly relations with the Corsican.

"When the Countess of Loudon, the wife of Lord Moira, the Governor-General of India," he said, pronouncing the English title with great respect, "visited this island, I arranged a dinner-party in her honour and I invited Bonaparte. This is the invitation I sent him:"

And with the wonderful memory he had for all the documents he sent, he quoted:

"'Sir Hudson and Lady Lowe would feel gratified if General Bonaparte would give them the honour of his company to

meet the Countess at dinner on Monday next at six o'clock.' "

"Can you tell me what anyone could be offended at in my invitation?" he added, turning to De Balmain. "And, do you know, I received no reply! Yes, gentlemen, I received no sort of answer to my invitation!" he repeated in a tragic tone and looked solemnly round the table.

With difficulty De Balmain was able to suppress a smile, and he thought that one must be quite a fool to send an invitation to Napoleon to meet *"the Countess."* He nodded his head sympathetically. At that moment the ladies rose from table; the men remained, and they were handed port and cigars. As Miss Susanna left the room, she felt, with an unaccountable and joyful emotion, that Count de Balmain's beautiful eyes were fixed on her back.

He really pleased her very much. There was only one thing about him that did not please her. When at tea-time she came up to him from behind—from the side where the candelabras stood—with a small saucer of jam in her hand, she noticed that the Russian count had a bald

place on the top of his head, as large as the saucer she was carrying. Although this bald place was hidden in a masterly manner by a lock of hair that was carefully brushed over it, and although De Balmain turned quickly, but in a natural manner, towards her, when he noticed that the young girl was approaching him unexpectedly from behind, so that the bald place quite disappeared and it was as if it did not exist, still nothing had escaped the sharp eyes of the fifteen-year-old Miss Susanna. This displeased her very much, but this was the only thing that displeased her.

Count de Balmain began to come to their house very often; he often joked with her, chaffed her, and corrected the mistakes she made in French—at Lady Lowe's request they often spoke French. On her sixteenth birthday, when out of habit some of the people of the house gave her dolls, he presented Miss Susie with a pretty work-box that he had had sent out from Paris. Her initials were embroidered on the red silk lining. Miss Mary opened her eyes very wide when she saw it and,

calling Susie to one side, she told her that such a work-box must have cost ten guineas at the very least, which Miss Susie could hardly believe, and would not have believed, if it had not been affirmed by Miss Mary, who knew everything. Susie was very much confused when she thanked the Count for such a wonderful present. De Balmain laughed kindly as he repeated her broken phrases, imitating her English accent when pronouncing French words—and Miss Susanna thought that his eyes seemed moist and somewhat oily like ripe greengages. This pleased her too. Late at night, when she was lying in her bed, she was amazed at the thought that the present from Paris must have been ordered half a year beforehand. She lost her breath from emotion and was not able to go to sleep for at least a quarter of an hour.

Then a month passed during which there was much that was unaccountable, agitating, terrible, and joyful. Miss Susanna felt that something unusual was going to happen, the most important thing in the whole world. This unusual thing

occurred one evening. Count de Balmain remained closeted with her parents for a long time in the Governor's study. Then he drove away and Sir Hudson Lowe accompanied him to the gate, where his carriage was awaiting him with a Negro and a Russian groom; there they also remained talking for a long time. In the meantime Lady Lowe came to her daughter and told her with great agitation and confusion that Count de Balmain had asked her hand. It was very awkward for Lady Lowe that she herself had only got married four years before her daughter. She felt that people would laugh about it. Her mother told Susie that Count de Balmain was a most eligible husband. Certainly it was strange to marry a Russian, and it was a pity she would have to remain for a long time in Russia. However, the Count was of Scottish descent, and part of his family had lived in England not long ago: Lady Lowe had personally known the last of the Scottish line of that celebrated family, Ramsey Boswell de Balmain, who had the right to the lands and the castle of

Balmoral. But, above all, the Count was an excellent man and a perfect gentleman.

"You are so young, Susie, aren't you?" Lady Lowe said with a sigh.

"I am, mother," Miss Susanna answered without hearing or understanding her own words.

"God bless you!"

At these words they both began to cry. Then Miss Mary came, and she also began to cry. Then Sir Hudson appeared. He said they ought not to cry, but to rejoice. The next day Miss Susanna Johnson became engaged to Count Alexander de Balmain. She was madly happy and over head and ears in love with her future husband. The Russian commissioner only awaited the permission of his Government to leave the island of Saint Helena. Before his departure the marriage was to take place.

CHAPTER TWO

Alexander Antonovich de Balmain, standing before his mirror, was tying his cravat for the third time. It never came out in the right way. It was necessary to make a bow exactly as it was recently worn by George Bryan Brummell. The Count had often met this first of European dandies (this word had just come into fashion and had taken the place of the former appellations of petit-maîtres, roués, incroyables) at the time he was attached to the Russian Embassy in London. The buckle on his shoes, the famous Brummell buckle, he had been able to imitate long ago and with great success. But the cravat proved a more difficult thing to master. Besides, it appeared to De Balmain that the society on the island of Saint Helena, owing to its inexperience, would be incapable of appreciating the

Charlotte du Cin 1824

genius displayed in the simplicity of the Brummell style—and he wondered whether it would not be better if he adopted a bolder mode of dress—perhaps in the spirit of Lord Byron's costumes.

"Should I go over from one B to another?" Alexander Antonovich asked himself, remembering the saying which had gone the round of London society, that there were only three real men in the world and all their names began with B: Bonaparte, Byron, and Brummell. Count de Balmain had often met Byron while in London. The arrival of De Balmain in London coincided with the blossoming into fame, both literary and social, of the author of "Childe Harold." De Balmain first saw the poet at an evening party given by Lady Harrowby, where the whole of the élite of London society had been invited to meet Madame de Staël. Byron sat motionless in an armchair, frowning as he watched the company, and scarcely rising at the approach of a lady. The men looked with ill will at the transparent pallor of his countenance, that shone with the inanimate

beauty of a marble statue, and at the black dress-coat which he wore instead of the blue dress-coat which was fashionable at the time. The young lord's discourteous immobility could be explained by his painful desire to hide his lameness. Several ladies, forgetting the rules of propriety, stared at the handsome young man. And Brummell himself, appearing for a moment in the room, followed by the envious glances of the young dandies who endeavoured to remember and imitate every minute detail of his simple elegance, cast a rapid glance at Byron, and although this was not his style, he nodded his head approvingly: he feared no rival—he was Brummell. The celebrated leader of the Tories was seated next to Byron; he was explaining to the young peer, with minute detail, the intentions of the higher Conservative policy after the expected defeat of Bonaparte. Byron listened with attention but without looking at his interlocutor, and then, after a short silence, he expressed his hopes that these views would not be realized. He personally desired with his whole heart that Napoleon

might be victorious—in spite of the monarchs, the Tory party, and the editor of the *Morning Post*. De Balmain could not refrain from laughing when he remembered the blinking eyes of the Conservative lord, who became quite confused at this answer. During the rest of the evening Byron spoke very little, and chiefly about the weather, and he was evidently thinking least of all about what he was saying. He paid not the slightest attention to the affected and talkative Madame de Staël, which greatly offended her. The author of "Childe Harold" only became animated when he heard the sound of the harpsichord and Catalani began to sing with her velvety voice a song by Grétry: *"Je crains de lui parler la nuit."* Byron's flashing eyes grew large, and seemed to have lost all connection with the earth. "He's showing off," De Balmain had said to console himself, but at the same time he was unable to desist from thinking he had never seen anything more beautiful than that face and those insane eyes. Immediately after the concert Byron rose and disappeared unobserved. He was considered

proud in society: to De Balmain it seemed that he was only shy. A few days later De Balmain met Lord Byron in quite other surroundings; it was late at night in Stephen's fashionable restaurant, where, by chance, they were sitting at adjacent tables. Byron was supping with two friends. In one of them, a short dark-haired man, with kind restless eyes, De Balmain recognized the great actor Kean, who on Wednesdays and Fridays caused all London to go mad during the three minutes' agony of the Danish Prince in the fifth act of *Hamlet*, and on Mondays, by the words, "And buried, gentle Tyrrel," in *Richard the Third*. Byron's other companion, a man of prodigious build, who wore his clothes awkwardly and touched the plates and glasses with so much care that it seemed as if he were afraid of breaking them, and whose whole appearance reminded you strongly of a rhinoceros, was the king of boxers, Jackson. Three such celebrities attracted the attention of the whole restaurant; the ladies and the foreigners looked at Byron, the courtesans and the men at Jackson, about whom

they whispered to each other with respectful dread: it was said he could fell an ox with a single blow of his fist. Byron's menu was the thing that attracted most attention: he ate nothing but lobster and biscuits, washing them down with strong brandy and hot water. The chief waiter, who knew the habits of the famous lord, brought him five or six times alternately a glass of brandy and a glass of hot water. De Balmain looked at the poet and could scarcely recognize in him Lady Harrowby's silent guest. Byron's face was shining with animation; he was relating something, and laughed loudly and good-humouredly at Kean's artistic speeches and wonderfully clever imitations of Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, Garrick, Sheridan, Fox, the Prince Regent, and other celebrated personages. Byron's laughter was echoed by the roars of the rhinoceros, who displayed his broken and whole teeth of enormous dimensions. Kean ate with his knife, he addressed the poet as Your Highness, and constantly looked round anxiously, especially towards De Balmain, who was staring at them not too politely.

At last he could stand it no longer, and said something in a whisper to his companions. Jackson raised his head and flashed at De Balmain huge fragments of his broken teeth and the whites of his small eyes; the Count instinctively slipped his hand into the pocket where he always carried a double-barrelled pistol, a masterpiece made to order by Lepage. However, Byron said something quickly to the rhinocerous, and he instantly became quiet again.

"This mad lord is a very interesting man. . . . Unusual boldness of thought. 'Childe Harold.' Well, I'm a poor judge of verse. . . . But his black dress-coat and his fantastic waistcoat . . . très personnel. . . . At the same time Brummell's style is better. One must be Byron to allow oneself to be eccentric. He swam across the English Channel—if he does not lie. I think he does not lie. . . . He has quite extraordinary eyes. . . . Why did his wife leave him? . . . Can the story that fledgling told me be true? . . ."

A young officer, who had shortly before arrived in the island of Saint Helena from

England, had told De Balmain, in a whisper and blushing, although no ladies were present at their conversation, of the scandalous reports that were circulated in London concerning the reasons of Byron's separation from his wife.

De Balmain again pulled the ends of his tie with his long slender fingers. This time the result was not so bad. Alexander Antonovich opened a small casket, thought for a moment at the sight of a dozen breast-pins that were lying in it, considering which pin would go best with the tie and suit he was wearing, and, choosing one, he stuck it into his cravat with great care, and then put on his waistcoat. De Balmain, with his great knowledge of life, was well aware of the importance people set on clothes. Brummell, the son of a tailor, became the first man in the most fastidious society in the world almost entirely owing to his taste in dress. And De Balmain devoted two hours daily to his toilet, though he carefully concealed that fact from others; it was impossible to accomplish it in less time. The Count always dressed himself.

Teeshka, a lad whom he had brought with him from Russia and who was now called his groom but formerly had been simply "the boy," never assisted at his toilet, nor did the Negro servant who had been engaged on the island.

"I shall probably receive Byron's latest work to-day," De Balmain said to himself, remembering with pleasure that at any moment he might receive the European mail, which had come by a ship that had arrived at the island on the previous day. "And there will certainly also be letters. It is impossible there should still be no answer from Nesselrode. . . . Is it possible that Lucie has again not written? As for that—she may go to the devil. . . . There are sure to be newspapers and books. I hope there will be less verse. . . . And yet many clever people in Europe write verse now. There's Goethe, Denon. . . . I fear I shall soon begin to write verses too. . . . A good deal of money is paid for them. They say Murray paid Byron six hundred pounds for 'Childe Harold,' and he made a present of the whole amount to somebody.

They'd have been of more use to me—all is so dear on this damned island. And what expenses I shall have when I get married!"

De Balmain buttoned his waistcoat and sprinkled himself with scent.

"All the same there is something frivolous about it. It's not exactly frivolous, but rather ridiculous: 'What is your occupation?' 'I write verses.' *'En voilà un métier.'* All men's occupations are not over-clever—mine any more than the others—but this one, I fancy, is the most silly of them all. There's nothing ridiculous in serving your country—but in making verses there is. By the by, authors have not yet become the fashion with us. Who would have read his verses if the late Derzhavin had not been a minister? 'Alcides, fall upon the Hydra bold; subdue its brutal force.' *C'est complètement idiot.* . . . Whom have we besides who writes verses? . . . *Ce pauvre bâtard de Joukovsky, un brave homme d'ailleurs* . . . or that Gargantuan Krylov . . . and a few boys. Chaadaev told me that there are two boys in the Tsarskoe Seld

Lyceum who write excellent verse. Engelhard praised them too. I think the most talented of the two is called Illichevsky. The other is called—I've forgotten. The devil take it—I've forgotten. My memory is getting bad. People say that at forty the memory always gets weak. . . . And another wrinkle is appearing here too—here near the nose."

De Balmain went up to another mirror that was hanging in the corner of the room, sideways to the window, the one that he specially liked. He always looked younger in this mirror, and the bald place on his head was not so visible. His examination comforted him somewhat.

"Susie has fallen in love with me!"

Alexander Antonovich sat down very carefully in an arm-chair, so as not to tumble his costume, and began to think. For the hundredth time he asked himself if he were not doing a very mad thing in getting married at forty, after the life he had led, to a girl of sixteen, and an English girl too.

CHAPTER THREE

Count de Balmain was the grandson of an emigrant, the descendant of an illustrious Scottish family, who had first been in the French service, then in the Turkish, and at last had settled down in Russia during the reign of the Empress Anne. His father had occupied the high post of Governor-General of the Kursk Government. De Balmain lost his father in his early childhood. Having finished his studies at the Cadet School, he had entered a Horse Guard regiment, and two years later, when he had attained the rank of captain, a strange and unexpected thing happened to him. After having passed a wild night, he had had a row with the street police, in consequence of which, by a sudden order of the Emperor Paul, he found himself deprived of his titles of nobility, degraded to the ranks, and sent to

the barracks without the slightest loss of time. He remained there only three days. During that time an event took place which was no less strange, although not quite so unexpected, and which was of great importance, not only to him alone, but to the whole of Russia.

On the third day after this misfortune, De Balmain, quite overwhelmed by what had happened to him, exhausted by physical exertion, constant humiliation, sleepless nights, and the dirt of the Pavlov barracks, was ordered out with his company for drill. However, his company did not go to the Tsaritsa's Meadow, but for some reason stopped near the Nevsky Prospect. The officers seemed perplexed and whispered together. Suddenly a man in a round hat appeared on the other side of the Nevsky. He was shouting something very excitedly. Alexander Antonovich could not take his eyes off him; in Paul's time people were sent to Siberia for wearing round hats, as the Emperor considered that round hats and waistcoats were the causes of the French Revolution. De Balmain's heart beat with a joyful and

terrible presentiment. At that moment a four-seated open calash drawn by a team of six horses, with a coachman in the national costume and shouting outriders, drove rapidly up—all this was also strictly prohibited. A general with a clever, frowning face, looking pale and weary as if he had passed the night in dissipation, was seated motionless in the calash. De Balmain instantly recognized the Governor-General of Petersburg, Count von der Pahlen. The soldiers stood at attention. The General ordered his carriage to stop, and summoning the officer in command of the company, he stretched his head out of the carriage and said something to him. The officer's expression changed suddenly and he crossed himself. De Balmain could not bear the painful excitement he was in any longer. He quite lost his head.

"Peter Alexéevich, for God's sake tell me what has happened!" he cried in a strange voice as he stepped out of the ranks towards Pahlen.

The commander of the company and the soldiers were dumbfounded. Pahlen looked for a moment with perplexity at

the young man but, recognizing him, he smiled slightly and, glancing towards De Balmain, he spoke a few words to the officer in charge of the company, and then, turning to the soldiers, he said in a calm, loud voice:

"Boys! His Majesty the Emperor Paul died last night from an apoplectic stroke. You will be conducted to take the oath of allegiance to his son the Emperor Alexander Pavlovich. There will be no drill to-day, and you will each receive a ration of vodka."

Then nodding to the officer, Pahlen touched the coachman with his hand. The outriders shouted with terrible voices, and the calash proceeded on its way to the Winter Palace, through the wet snow. De Balmain, who was feeling benumbed, was able to notice as the calash drove away that, notwithstanding the cold March weather, Count von der Pahlen took off his hat and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

The soldiers remained silent.

"Why did he die? He seemed all right yesterday," one of the soldiers said at last.

"Why should we take the oath without reflection? In that way we can swear allegiance to anyone."

"We have to serve for twenty-five years."

"Oh, what's that to us? Whoever's priest is our father. . . . There'll be vodka, and we can be thankful for that."

"Of course it's all the same to us, but for their honours. . . . The old Tsar did not show much favour to the officers."

Two hours later De Balmain left the barracks in a cab, accompanied by the soldiers' unfriendly glances, and after having been to the public baths, he returned to his old flat to drink champagne (by the evening there was not a single bottle of champagne left in the whole of Petersburg), and the next day he, like everybody else, went to the Michael Palace to pay his last respects to the remains of the Emperor Paul I.

During those two days all who wore an officer's uniform entered the palaces without let or hindrance and did whatever they liked there. They paid no attention to the members of the Imperial family. For

a few days the officers were the masters of Russia. Only the day before, the conspirators had had visions of torture and the executioner, but on the 12th of March the general opinion was that the murderers were not only secure from danger, but were sure of honours, money, and power. Everyone asserted that he had taken part in the conspiracy, or at least that he had known about it from the first moment. It was only some days later that people began to disavow any knowledge of it. Various surmises were made about the future. Some said that Pahlen wished to introduce into Russia a constitutional form of government and that Plato Zubov had sent to the library of the Cadet Institution for Delorme's *Constitution of England*. It was also said that the colonel of the Ismailov regiment, Nikolai Bibikov, had offered to cut the throats of the whole of the Imperial family.

Passing through the Nativity Gate, which is situated to the left of the Palace Church, De Balmain mounted the same winding staircase that the murderers had ascended, to the first floor of the Michael

Palace. The strangled monarch was lying on his bed in the bedchamber, dressed in the uniform of the Horse Guards. His face, which was covered with black and blue stripes, had been carefully but badly painted up by some artists. A huge hat had been tilted on his head so that it almost covered his left eye. His throat was hidden under a wide cravat. The corpse was surrounded by the regicides. They were all drunk—after the murder the Imperial cellars had been pillaged. Here all sorts of reports were circulated, often greatly exaggerated. It was said that Pahlen had been the soul of the whole matter, but he had managed to guarantee himself in the event of a miscarriage of this attempt. Then, appearing with a company of soldiers, he would have arrested Alexander and the conspirators.

Paul's real murderers were Nikolai Zubov, Prince Yaskvel, Tatarinov, and Skariatin, but the ringleader was General Benningsen. It was also said that the money for the attempt had been provided by the British Ambassador, Whitworth, who acted through the assistance of his mis-

tress, Plato Zubov's sister Zherebtseva. Others related that a few days before the murder ubiquitous Bonaparte became cognizant of the English plot against the Tsar, and that the First Consul's people were hastening from Paris to Petersburg to warn and protect Paul. Nobody doubted that now peace would be concluded with England, and that war would be declared against France (an order had already been given to recall the Cossacks, who had been sent by Paul to conquer India). There were also reports that the French Ambassador, while paying his last respects to the remains of the Emperor, had pushed aside the cravat that was round his neck, as if by chance, but really on purpose, and the terrible marks of Skariatin's scarf were disclosed to the grenadier who was on duty. The part that Alexander had taken in this affair was spoken of with the greatest pleasure, and it was even exaggerated, as it guaranteed the safety of the others. All sorts of details were told of the supper at Talyzin's, the sending of two detachments, the evil omen of the cawing of the fright-

ened rooks in the old limes of the Summer Garden. It was whispered that Plato Zubov had shown signs of fear when the Hussar Kirillov, who was on guard at the door of the Imperial bedchamber, had raised the alarm, and the Emperor would certainly have escaped if it had not been for the cool-headedness of Benningsen, who directed the murder as he might have done a battle. All sorts of terrible details were recounted about the maltreatment of the corpse. Pahlen's words at the conspirators' supper, "pour faire une omelette il faut casser les œufs," were carried literally into effect by the drunken officers.

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A feeling of dread seized hold of De Balmain. He left the bedchamber and went into the next room, which in that strange palace proved to be a small Dutch kitchen. This room was empty. But in a corner the Princess Anna Gagarina, the murdered Emperor's mistress, was seated on a stool, with her head resting against the stove; she was sobbing and moaning

disconsolately. Young De Balmain, who was only twenty at that time, suddenly felt an unaccountable pity for that ugly woman. She was the only person in the world, with the exception of distant, powerful, and mysterious Bonaparte, who regretted the death of the mad Tsar. De Balmain wanted to say some kind and consoling words to her, but he could think of none, and so he continued to wander through the crowded apartments of the gloomy palace. The Oval Hall where the watch, which was taken from the Horse Guard regiments, was usually stationed, now presented a scene of particularly noisy gaiety. In the middle of the room, surrounded by a group of obsequious courtiers, the Empress Catherine's last favourite, Prince Plato Zubov, with the usual smile on his small pouting lips, was standing, making all sorts of jokes, which were invariably greeted with loud bursts of laughter from most of the company. A few paces from this group a Hussar officer, of huge stature and Herculean strength, was staggering about. He was

Nikolai Zubov, Plato's brother and the son-in-law of Field-Marshal Suvorov. He was quite drunk, and a large black bruise could be seen on his swollen face. Nikolai was holding on to the button of phlegmatic, long-nosed Benningsen's uniform, who listened good-naturedly to his drunken chatter, which was plentifully interlarded with the expletives of the common people. Nikolai Zubov was trying to prove that he had greater strength in his hands than Alexei Orlov.[1]

"No, can't you understand, you ugly German mug?" he was saying. "Just listen to me, and remember it was easy for Aleshka to strangle that puny Peter, and, besides, Fedka Baryatinsky pressed down his hands. But his sonny was stronger—do ye see what a black eye he has given me? . . . Now, wait a moment, try to understand, can't you? Listen to me, you Jewish phiz. . . ."

Somebody in the group surrounding Plato Zubov recited a couplet that Viel-

[1] Alexei Orlov was, with Prince Bariatinsky, the assassin of the Emperor Peter III, the father of Paul I.

gorsky had just composed on Paul's death:

"Que la bonté divine, arbitre de son sort,
Lui donne le repos que nous rendit sa mort."

The smile on Plato Zubov's face expressed entire approval, and the verses were greeted with loud laughter. Somebody mentioned the new Imperial couple. All were silent at once. Prince Zubov frowned slightly when he heard Alexander's name, and remarked carelessly that the Empress Lizanka was a very pretty little girl.

"Platosha!" the drunken Hussar shouted enthusiastically as he released Benningsen's button. "Oh, you lewd old dog—Lizanka! She's no Lizanka of yours! You can't live with every Empress. . . . Why, brother, you like old women. . . . Ah! what a pity old Katie is gone! . . . Yes, brother, that was an Empress, the old witch! Eh?—a German, but how she exalted Russia! Eh? Didn't she discover my father-in-law? Eh? Come, let me embrace you though you are a lewd old dog. . . ."

With a feeling of great disgust De Balmain left the Oval Hall. In one of the adjoining rooms he saw a little boy dressed in mourning, with a tear-stained, frightened face, who was unknown to him. The boy was accompanied by a highly respectable, frowning lady, with a mysterious manner, who was holding a scrap of paper and a pencil in her hand. The boy was Paul's son and afterwards became Nikolai I, and the lady was his governess, Madame Adlerberg. Somebody told De Balmain that the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, wishing to know the names of all her husband's murderers, had sent the child and his governess to stand there, ordering the latter to write down the names of all those officers who grew pale when they went past the son of the murdered man. This melodramatic device of these two German women amused De Balmain, more especially when he saw Prince Plato Zubov, who passed through the room, stop near the boy and pat him on the cheek with the long fingers of his small and shapely hand, saying,

"How like his grandfather he is—wonderful!"

Alexander Antonovich was about to leave when he heard from a person standing near him that the whole of the Imperial family had come from the Winter Palace and were now going to Paul's bedchamber. De Balmain and many other officers hurried there. The first to enter was the Empress Marie Feodorovna leaning on the arm of her equerry, Mukhanov. Her full, healthy, short-sighted face was covered with red blotches, and from time to time she sobbed hysterically; she was followed by Alexander, who was as white as a corpse. The lower jaw of his remarkably pleasant, almost childlike face trembled convulsively. When she entered the bedchamber—the doors had been thrown wide open—Marie Feodorovna removed her hand from Mukhanov's arm, stopped, and exclaimed theatrically: "Gott helfe mir ertragen!" [1] and then moved on, but before she reached the bed she staggered back with a hoarse cry. Alexander's white

[1] God help me to bear it.

face became dark grey. Suddenly the Empress turned towards her son, and said to him in Russian in a loud voice so that all might hear:

"I congratulate you—you are the Emperor!"

Equerry Mukhanov hastily cast down his eyes. Alexander took a step forward, opened his mouth, raised his arms, and, waving them in the air, he suddenly fell heavily to the ground senseless. Elizaveta Alexéevna and the courtiers rushed to raise the Tsar from the floor.

CHAPTER FOUR

THOSE March days which influenced the whole reign of Alexander I had likewise enormous consequences for De Balmain. His rank, position, and titles of nobility were, of course, restored to him at once; but the three days he had passed in the soldiers' barracks had destroyed for ever any desire he had to continue in the military service. It appeared repugnant to him to continue to torment and humiliate others as he had been tormented and humiliated during three days. Besides, after the scenes he had witnessed in the Michael Palace, the Count wished to leave Petersburg—to get far away from the blood-stained people who disposed of the destinies of a great empire with absolute power from that blood-stained palace. It was not that De. Balmain's principles prompted this desire—he had no princi-

ples. In place of them he had innate natural integrity, and an early acquired indifference. He wished to render his life, as far as it was possible, refined, easy, varied, and elegant. He also had a longing to go to Paris and London, to become acquainted with the two mighty powers of the West to whose rivalry, as he thought, the mad Russian Emperor had been sacrificed. Alexander Antonovich resigned his commission in the army and entered the diplomatic service. At that time his position was a very favourable one. On the one hand, he had suffered under Paul's régime, while, on the other, he had been confined in the barracks during the fatal days, and consequently it was quite clear to all that he could neither have had a direct nor an indirect connection with the regicides. These two circumstances, added to De Balmain's cleverness, his success with women, and his willingness to give his services, no matter on what principles, were quite sufficient to assure him a brilliant career in the reign of Alexander I. De Balmain's career was, however, not a brilliant but only a good

one—chiefly because he himself was in no haste to improve it. He was not as ambitious as he was curious. He wanted to observe from a short distance—from the first row of stalls—the grand political performance, and from time to time to appear behind the scenes and on the stage. To live and to see were necessities for De Balmain, and he really lived and saw very much.

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By blood a Scotchman, but a Russian by education and partly by nature; the grandson of a seeker after adventures; the possessor of a romantic soul; half a military man, half a civilian; a brilliant diplomatist, and a former officer of the Horse Guards; a lion in society, and the darling of the women; the hero of numberless light romances; known in the highest society of all the capitals of Europe by the nickname of "la coqueluche des salons," Count de Balmain took from life what it could give him—and he was able to take pretty much. During his responsible missions at Naples, Vienna, and

London he did very little work, but already in his fourth decade he felt physically tired out from the occupations of a homeless, idle, diplomatic career, and morally from his elegant, easy-going scepticism. This weariness, which showed itself in the Count's face and in his slightly stooping figure, was very becoming to him. He knew that it pleased women, and he even slightly exaggerated his great weariness of life. In the year 1813 he re-entered the army. He really ought to have done so a year earlier, at the time of the National War,[1] but De Balmain was preoccupied at that moment by a very interesting romance he was having with an English girl. However, he wanted to see real war in the proper way, and when he was tired of the English girl he arranged to get an appointment on the staff, and went through several campaigns as a lieutenant-colonel in the armies of General Valmoden, the Crown Prince of Sweden, and Chernyshev. He was present at the battles of Grossbeeren, Uterborn, Dennewitz, and

[1] Name given by the Russians to the campaign of 1812.

Waterloo. He had received a number of orders surmounted by swords, which went as far as the Vladimir Order of the 4th Class. Then, tired of the army, he again entered the diplomatic service. There was nothing more to see in Europe. The Vienna Congress was the last act of the world drama, which evidently closed for all the great, long, and unusually noisy season. Simultaneously with the end of the Napoleonic Wars another thing occurred which was a far more important event in Count de Balmain's life. The bald place on the crown of his head suddenly showed itself quite plainly, and at the same time he began to feel the imperative necessity of curtailing the number of his yearly love affairs. This produced sorrowful thoughts. On one occasion, returning from a ball, he was unable to go to sleep for a long time—for almost the whole night; and while he was lying in bed, thoughts of death entered his mind for the first time, and he even reflected on the life beyond the grave. This worried him very much. The next morning he began seriously to wonder if he should not enter the

Order of Freemasons. Why not? The Freemasons know all about these matters, and are adepts in the life beyond the grave.

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Already before this time Count de Balmain had been interested in the Order of Freemasons, though from quite other motives. The comparative mystery with which it was surrounded, the great antiquity of the Order—it was supposed to have originated in the time of Solomon—its strange but poetic ritual, its extraordinary names and titles, about which all manner of legends were related, had each contributed to interest Count Alexander's romantic imagination. It is true that the old and experienced members of the Moscow English Club asserted that the Order of Freemason's brought no good, and they cited the examples of the Freemasons Radishchev [1] and Speransky,[2] who had both ended so badly. However, De Bal-

[1] A writer and Freemason who was persecuted during the reign of Catherine II.

[2] A distinguished Russian statesman who fell into disgrace in 1812.

main knew that in all the countries of Europe very many highly placed personages, not excepting even kings, were members of the Order. It was said that Napoleon himself was a Freemason, so that it might even be useful for his career to enter the Order, though on this score it had less interest for De Balmain. The Count began to make very careful inquiries of persons belonging to the highest society whom report called Freemasons, and he very soon got to know that Several Lodges existed in Russia. In one of these Lodges, called the "Loge des Amis Réunis," many men of his circle, and also those of higher rank, were among the members. The rank of "Rose-Croix" in that Lodge was held by the Duke Alexander of Würtemberg, Zherebtsev, and Count Stanislaus Pototsky; while the "Eleusian" rank was held by Vorontsev, Naryshkin, Lopuchin, and many other men who unquestionably belonged to the very best society. It was certain that nothing unlawful, or in any case nothing very unlawful, could take place in this Lodge, as the Minister of Police, Balashev, held the rank of "Knight of the East" in it.

There was still another Lodge—the Palestine Lodge—but somehow it was less interesting. It was not quite nice that the chief part was played in this Lodge by a Frenchman, Charrier, who was called the great chosen Knight Cadoche, Prince of Lebanon and Jerusalem. This Frenchman was tutor at Balashev's, and De Balmain could not understand why the Prince of Lebanon and Jerusalem had become a tutor. But it was not at all nice that the well-known restaurant-keeper, Tardiffe, was a member of this Lodge. De Balmain often dined in this restaurant, and then he called the master by his Christian name, while the latter stood, with a notebook in his hand, nodding his head amiably and respectfully, as he wrote down the name of each dish or wine. De Balmain was more or less free from aristocratic prejudices, and he had nothing against the restaurant-keeper, but it appeared to him that it must be either the one thing or the other: he must either not give orders to Tardiffe for dinners in his restaurant, or not address him by his Masonic titles in the Lodge.

To do both the one and the other appeared to him somewhat strange. There was also the United Lodge of Alexander, Elizabeth, and Peter. Afterwards all these Lodges were united into one: "The Great Directing Lodge of Vladimir the Regulator." But just as De Balmain had decided to join, the "Great Directing Lodge" divided into the "Great Provincial Lodge" and the "Great Astra Lodge"; but none of the Freemasons could explain clearly to De Balmain the cause of the constant differences between people whose sole object was to be united. In answer the names of Schröder, Fessler, Ellisen were mentioned, but these names meant but little to De Balmain. Another thing that seemed strange to him was that both the Emperor Paul and Count von der Pahlen had belonged to a Masonic Order at the same time: it again appeared to him—either the one or the other.

Circumstances, however, prevented Alexander Antonovich from taking part in the work of the Freemasons. Quite unexpectedly, shortly after the Battle of Waterloo,

he was offered the post of commissioner representing the Emperor of Russia on the island of Saint Helena, where Napoleon had been exiled. De Balmain did not hesitate long before accepting the offer, which to a certain extent warranted and supported the reputation he had acquired of being a kind of Casanova. On the island of Saint Helena he expected not only to become acquainted, but to become intimate, with Napoleon, who in his distant exile would doubtless value his brilliant capacities as "homme d'esprit," "causeur," and story-teller. Count de Balmain had known most of the celebrated people of Europe, and in his collection there was only wanting the most celebrated man of them all—the present exile of Saint Helena. Alexander Antonovich enjoyed in anticipation the pleasure he would have from his intimate conversations with that man of genius, and also the stories he would afterwards be able to relate, for which his close connection with Napoleon would afford such rich matter. He reckoned that in two or three years he would be able to return to Europe surrounded by an aureole

as the chosen friend of the discrowned Emperor, and as the guardian of all the most piquant secrets of the back scenes of European politics. Besides, the commissioner on Saint Helena was to receive a salary of thirty thousand francs—and the importance of the post almost amounted to that of an Ambassador.

The rainbow-tinted anticipations of De Balmain were not realized. Not only did Alexander Antonovich not attain any intimate friendship with Napoleon, but he did not even come near the ex-Emperor during his sojourn on the island. Bonaparte boycotted the foreign commissioners. In order to obtain an audience of the ex-Emperor it was necessary to apply to the Marshal of the Palace, General Bertrand, and this was strictly prohibited in the instructions De Balmain had received, as such an application would be tantamount to a recognition of the title of Emperor as being possessed by the exile. Alexander Antonovich could not understand for a long time why a man of such a powerful intellect as Napoleon could lay so much store by etiquette that was quite sense-

less in his position and with his past life, especially as these formalities deprived him of the society of the cleverest man on the island of Saint Helena, after himself; for De Balmain considered, and not without cause, that he could claim that distinction. Afterwards the Frenchmen Gourgaud and Montholon, who were closely attached to the Emperor, explained to him that the fierce struggle for his title which Bonaparte carried on in Saint Helena had dynastic reasons. Napoleon thought they would be useful in the future to his little son. On the other hand, the Governor of Saint Helena, Sir Hudson Lowe, had demanded categorically of De Balmain, from the first days of his stay on the island, that in accordance with the strict execution of his instructions, he should never call the exile of Saint Helena either directly or indirectly otherwise than General Bonaparte, and this alone would have been sufficient to preclude any possibility of a meeting, as Alexander Antonovich felt that his tongue would refuse to obey him if he tried to address Napoleon as "mon Général" as he would Vaska Davydov.

For this reason, however strange, stupid, and vexatious it might be, De Balmain lived for several years at a distance of about ten miles from Napoleon without ever having seen him near. He was obliged to content himself with collecting all sorts of reports and anecdotes that came from Longwood; he put them into choice French, embellished them with various "mots d'esprit," and sent them as reports to Petersburg. But this was very different from relating them personally. Besides, it became known to him, through letters he received from friends, and also by what he heard from Captain Golovin, who had recently arrived at Saint Helena in the frigate *Kamtchatka* that the Emperor Alexander, instead of reading his reports, read the Bible with Mesdames Krudener and Tatarinova. It was no use giving himself much trouble for Nesselrode, who even if he were able to appreciate such reports, would not increase his salary. There was no interesting society on the island, the climate was terrible, and it affected De Balmain's nervous system; he slept badly and he began to feel that

he changed rapidly from one frame of mind to another. The word neurasthenia had not been invented then. In addition to all this, life on the island was very expensive and already during the first year the Count had been obliged to take steps, by means of transparent hints, to obtain an increase of his salary up to fifty thousand francs. Lastly he felt a very great inconvenience. With his usual foresight Alexander Antonovich had brought with him to the island,[1] together with various cases of champagne and cognac, that pretty, convenient, and not too tiresome Lucie with whom he had passed an agreeable week before embarking; but it was made clear to him that such an undesirable fellow-traveller lowered the dignity of the Imperial commissioner, and it had been necessary to dispatch Lucie from the

[1] Specialists may notice that some details of the narrative are not to be found in any literary sources. They have been communicated to me by Count J. A. de Balmain, who was so kind as to share with me his family traditions in so far as they concerned the Russian commissioner on the island of Saint Helena. *The Author.*

island with all possible haste. All this had annoyed De Balmain very much. He went for a trip to Rio de Janeiro, he was presented there to the Emperor of Brazil, who turned out to be a very stupid savage; he wanted to hunt jaguars, but nothing came of it; besides, it is evident that jaguars were no substitute for pretty women.

When he returned from Brazil quite a stupid thing happened to De Balmain: on the sultry island of Saint Helena this celebrated conqueror of hearts suddenly fell in love with a girl of sixteen, the Governor's stepdaughter, Miss Susanna Johnson.

And though he constantly said to himself that for him, with his character and fickleness, it were madness to get married and to bind himself for ever, and though he prized the accustomed liberty of a bachelor's life—though he clearly remembered that the most interesting women of the world and the *demi-monde* became repugnant to him at most after two months, and more often, especially latterly, on the morning after a night passed with them—

still Count Alexander Antonovich de Balmain proposed to a little English girl of sixteen, though the night before he had firmly decided not to make such a proposal on any account.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Your Excellency, the mail has arrived!" Teeshka exclaimed joyfully as he hurried into the room with a parcel, and thus interrupted the Count's sad thoughts.

The mail was a small one. But De Balmain saw at once that it contained what he had long expected, and he hastened to open the official, sealed envelope. His face brightened; Count Lieven informed the Russian commissioner, in Nesselrode's name, that his request to be transferred to Russia had been granted, and that His Majesty the Emperor was most graciously pleased to congratulate the Count on his approaching marriage. At the same time De Balmain was awarded a special gratuity in money, and a sum for his travelling expenses. He could not have expected anything better.

"Alexander Antonovich, shall we soon return to Russia?" Teeshka asked.

Between the Count and his servant a certain familiarity had long since been established: they could speak Russian only to each other, and in truth Teeshka was nearer to Alexander Antonovich than Sir Hudson and Lady Lowe, who were members of his future family.

"Soon! I have my recall. Very soon now. First the wedding, and then we'll be off."

"Well, the Lord be thanked! This is no life. It's not life on this damned island. You can't say a word to anyone."

"You've learned to speak English."

"Well, but what sort of conversation is that? There are no girls. You've money for vodka, and if you please, there's no vodka to be got. You've to drink whisky, and what a price you've to pay for it too! At home you could buy a whole pailful of vodka for it."

"There's something for whisky. Drink the young lady's health; and order the calash."

"You'll be pleased to go to their Excel-

lencies," Teeshka said with a wink—"to Plantation House?"

"Yes, yes, to Plantation House. Look sharp."

"The niggers will harness in no time. Alexander Antonovich, I shall come with you, I don't want to remain here."

Teeshka hurried off. The Count began to examine his mail. There was a parcel of books and newspapers, but only two letters.

"There's again nothing from Lucie," De Balmain thought. "The worthless hussy! Did she deserve to have five thousand spent on her?"

But when he remembered what capital things Lucie knew, and what a good time they had had together, De Balmain smiled and decided that it had been worth while all the same.

The first letter was from London from his former colleague, Krivtsev. He had just returned from Russia, and gave De Balmain all sorts of news. Arakcheev's [1] position was stronger than ever and the

[1] A favourite of Alexander I, famous for his stupidity and cruelty.

Empire was governed, as formerly, by Nastasya Minkin.[1] Kochubey had been appointed Minister for the Home Department, so that people regretted Kozodavlev —who could have imagined that! "Louisa" was always travelling about, he had just returned from Finland, and had gone off post-haste to Warsaw to reconcile Novosiltsev with Chartorysky, and he reads the Bible in his *dormeuse*. The amount of money he has given to Kryudenersha is incalculable. Lucie cost you much less. (The Emperor Alexander was known to the diplomatists under the name of "Louisa," which had been the code name employed for him in the ciphered correspondence between Nesselrode and Speransky.) "Louisa" is living, as formerly, with Naryshkina, or more properly speaking, such reports are circulated. The court physician Wylie is of another opinion, however, and asserts that "Louisa," as always, over-estimates his powers. With whom Naryshkina is unfaithful to "Louisa" is not known, but it is certainly not Gagarin. Prince Alex-

[1] Arakcheev's mistress.

ander Golitzin is still very powerful, and continues to talk almighty bosh which nobody can understand. It is reported that the very aged Kondraty Selivanov, otherwise the eunuch's god Peter Fedorovich, who declares that he was born of a chaste conception of the Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, has been exiled to the Suzdalsky Monastery—*une drôle d'histoire.* In the Michael Palace Tatarina is as zealous as heretofore, with white dresses, round dances, and perspiration. Lieutenant-Colonel Dubovitsky of the Preobrazhensky regiment wears fetters weighing thirty pounds and whips himself for the good of his soul; this would not matter, but he whips his children likewise, and one is sorry for them. As I hear, Speransky has also lost his senses. He looks at his navel for hours on end, and keeps repeating, "Lord have mercy on me!" Some say it is to see some light coming from Tabor, while others assert it is to get into "Louisa's" favour again. The Goncharovs, of Moscow, have a large orchestra of forty musicians; however, each man plays only one note. The Minister of Finance,

Guriev, has invented a wonderful sort of gruel made with fruit and a sweet sauce—it is called Guriev's gruel—our finances are bad, but the gruel is splendid, and for its sake we can forgive the low rate of our rouble; the wits say that it will probably be the only thing to save Guriev's name from oblivion. A leaflet is being circulated in Petersburg—by the by, it's an old one now—with the following contents: "Truth is burnt; goodness is swept from the earth; sincerity has hidden itself; justice has run away; virtue begs for alms; charity is arrested; sensitiveness is in the madhouse; credit is bankrupt; conscience has lost its wits; faith has remained in Jerusalem; hope is lying at the bottom of the sea together with her anchor; honesty has retired from service; meekness has been locked up for quarrelling in the police station; and patience is exhausted."

De Balmain read and re-read Krivtsev's letter with pleasure, rapidly considering how each of these communications might be of importance to him on his return to Russia; but he could find nothing of great consequence in any of them. The other

was a philosophical and political letter. It was sent him also by an opportunity from Europe by Rzhevsky, an old schoolfellow of the Cadet Institution. Rzhevsky was a liberal, an enthusiast, and a Freemason. It would have been difficult to find two men less alike, yet who agreed better than Rzhevsky and De Balmain. Rzhevsky loved humanity in general, and he loved De Balmain in particular; he trusted him and sincerely wished to bear him out of the darkness of society and save his immortal soul. De Balmain was able to get on admirably with all sorts of men; he easily entered into and accommodated himself to the tone of each of them, and he was on specially good terms with Rzhevsky, as with him, owing to his goodness, it was difficult not to be on good terms. Rzhevsky wrote in Russian, and the style of his letter slightly irritated Alexander Antonovich.

"Why don't they write as they talk? Why all these Slavonic idioms? *C'est ridicule!* It would have been better if he had written in French. . . ."

But Rzhevsky's letter bore witness that

in Petersburg the French language was no longer in vogue in his circle. He sent the Count some books and gave him old tidings about the Freemasons—they had not met for a long time. He wrote among other things that the celebrated Pavel Ivanonich Pestel [1] had left the Lodge of the United Friends, and had joined the Lodge of the Three Virtues, because the Russian language was used in this Lodge, while French was the language of the other one.

"En voilà une raison," De Balmain thought.

In the Lodge of the Three Virtues Pestel received a title of the third rank, but he did very little work—he appeared disenchanted with the Order of Freemasons. "My friend, can you realize how much we feel his loss?" Rzhevsky wrote. "It is only black souls that are unable to love him, or at least to respect him."

But De Balmain could not appreciate this, as he did not like haughty Pestel, and saw that he was a man who was ready

[1] Chief of the future revolutionary movement of December, 1825.

to do very dangerous things. The other two Freemasons about whom Rzhevsky wrote, also did not inspire him with much confidence: they were Chaadaev and Griboêdov, though he did not think them in any way dangerous.

Perhaps the old men of the English Club are right! These gentlemen will play, till they get to Siberia.

Rzhevsky wrote about the treachery of the strong men of the earth; of the obscurantism of the people who are made of dirt, powder, and galloons; of the appointment of Magnitsky as curator of the Kasan University; of the deductions that were made from the soldiers' pay for rods; that the Emperor seems to have told Count Ozharovsky that every Russian is either a rogue or a fool; he also informed him of the constant grumbling of the military settlers, which, on the borders, might easily end in risings.

"Those who are able, plunder; those who have not the courage, steal! What remains for honest people?" he exclaimed. "With us every day brings insults to humanity, to the simplest justice, to enlight-

enment. Men like themselves are gambled for, given away, and tyrannized over! Where is this law to be found? Where is the prosperity of Russia? Where are the glorious councils of our forefathers?"

"Well, my fathers never met in glorious councils," De Balmain thought. "My ancestors on the father's side were Scotchmen, and my grandmother, Countess Devier, was probably of Jewish descent. . . . And there was nothing excellent in those unwashed citizens of Novgorov who pushed each other from the bridge into the water. . . ."

"In the affairs of Europe the domination of the Court of Vienna over ours is everywhere visible. How much the nations are deluded! They will regret past times and they will bless the memory of the conqueror Napoleon, whom you are guarding now—why, my friend? The despotism of kings is worse than the absolute power of Bonaparte, for where have they his genius? No, it is impossible to make covenants with kings. The peoples wish for the sovereignty of the laws; and to common sense

the law is the will of the peoples. Empires can flourish without slavery.

"We Russians pride ourselves upon being the saviours of Europe. Foreigners see us differently. They see that our strength is the reserves of the despotism of the Holy Alliance. It is not the Russians who are disliked, but their government, which oppresses the peoples for the benefit of the monarchs. Why is this? In Spain the insurgents are assembling, in Italy there are Carbonari, in Greece, the Hetairists. Is it possible that we are worse than the Greeks or the Spaniards?"

"That's where he's driving," the Count thought with pleasure.

Further on Rzhevsky alluded to an article in the *Spirit of the Magazines* about the Turkish constitution, which circumscribed the power of the Sultan by the power of the Mohammedan clergy, and he quoted with sympathy the opinion of that organ of the Press: "What is this so-called constitution, when compared with the one under which Great Britain prospers?" In conclusion he vaguely men-

tioned some sort of "Union of Prosperity," which in importance would not be second to the splendid German "Tugendbund" (here Rzhevsky had drawn between the lines the seal of the society: a beehive with bees) or any other society. De Balmain would be a welcome member of it.

"Well, I shall first think about it," Alexander Antonovich said to himself.

The letter ended with some verses by a young poet about Alexander I, which were being circulated in Russia. Rzhevsky quoted the first verse of a poem entitled "Noël":

> Hurrah! a despot's riding
> Through all the Russian lands;
> In tears the Saviour's biding—
> The weeping nation stands:
> "Know well, ye sons of Russia,
> And the whole world inform,
> Of Austria and Prussia
> I wear the uniform."

The author of the verses was called Pushkin. De Balmain was relieved to remember that this was the name of the second of the young Tsarskoe Selo poets, who was only inferior to Illichevsky. The

verses were certainly lively, but Alexander Antonovich shook his head doubtfully. It was excusable in a boy of twenty senselessly to attack and oppose the government. De Balmain himself wanted to act in this matter seriously.

Like most of the people of that day, the Count neither liked nor respected Alexander I. He was quite willing to admit that a new conspiracy would take place in Russia like the one of 1801 or of 1762 and that the Tsar, who had wearied everybody, would be strangled as his father and grandfather had been strangled. Such an undertaking did not seem to be very difficult to De Balmain, as, judging by the times, Alexander's popularity was not much greater than his father's had been. The Count would not take part in such an act, not only from fear, but also from fastidiousness; he remembered with disgust the scenes he had witnessed in his distant youth in the Michael Palace. However, he was not unwilling to profit by the fruits of a conspiracy carried out by others. But the people who had evidently joined this Union of Prosperity, the Union itself,

and even its name, did not inspire the Count with much confidence. De Balmain was personally acquainted with most of these men; he knew the type to which they belonged and which, to his mind, was well represented by Rzhevsky, and he thought that such visionaries were quite unfit to carry out the plan they had conceived—Pahlen was not among them. It was now more than twenty years since old Pahlen had last left his estates in Courland; it was reported that he was afraid of the dark, and he got drunk every year on the eve of the twelfth of March. It was difficult to suppose that he would again put himself at the head of the new conspiracy. But all these Rzhevskys, Volkhonskys, Chaadaevs, Muravievs, were excellent and honest men. . . . They were in their proper place when seated in their studies with a book or pen in their hands, or when sitting together over a bottle of champagne, arguing about the prosperity of the nations. But at the door of the bedchamber of the sleeping monarch with Skaryatinsky's scarf, or Nikolai Zubov's snuff-box, they were—*quelle plaisanterie!*

. . . It was only in cold and daring Pestel, with his low voice, that something could be found of Pahlen. However, even Pestel had not a court revolution as his object, but something far different.

"The Union of Prosperity? They think that my Teeshka requires a Turkish or a British constitution! He requires vodka —that's true; he requires a woman also—like myself—and who knows what besides? It is not without reason that Count Kapnist declares that our liberal-minded little noblemen are preparing, for their own misfortune, their clean, little, liberal revolution; as every clean, little, liberal revolution is inevitably followed by a revolt of the people, and new disorderly times. Perhaps Kapnist is right."

But De Balmain was able to understand least of all the connection that existed between the conspirators and the Freemasons, to which Rzhevsky and his adherents belonged. De Balmain had been able to look into the political kitchens in various countries sufficiently closely, and he knew very well that every political movement, reactionary or revolutionary,

was a course, earthly, cruel, and dirty business; Freemasonry evidently belonged to quite another category—its sphere was the immortality of the soul, the life after death, but certainly not conspiracies, nor insurrections and revolutions. At the same time Rzhevsky, and all of them, evidently connected their Masonic work with the Union of Prosperity. From this nothing but Siberia can result. . . . However, who can tell? . . . There is no certainty in anything!

A whole swarm of troubled thoughts rushed into De Balmain's mind. He felt that all this was very important, and might have the greatest influence on his future life. But it was evidently quite out of the question to settle matters of that nature there. He comforted himself by deciding that he would reflect on them when once he was in Russia, where he would be able to find out for certain all about the Union of Prosperity and the Freemasons' new lines of thought. Partly of course this depended on the way he was received, when he returned to Petersburg, by Nesselrode, Capodistrias, and

the Emperor Alexander himself. In the meantime he could not help admitting that "Louisa" had been fairly gracious to him. The gratuity had come at a very opportune moment. De Balmain decided then and there that when he was in Paris, on his way home, he would buy a pair of earrings for his wife, and a collection of firearms for himself, and he appeared at the porch in a more healthy frame of mind. The calash was already awaiting him there.

CHAPTER SIX

THE young couple's excursion was very successful.

Count and Countess de Balmain had driven out that morning in the Governor's carriage. The day of their departure for Russia was approaching. Before leaving Saint Helena for ever, they wished to take a drive for the last time on the island where Napoleon's evil destiny had brought them so strangely together. They wished to see, at last, those corners of the island where neither of them had been, either alone or together, and where they would never be again. The word NEVER sounded ominous to De Balmain, as it does to every man who is no longer young.

There were many corners of Saint Helena they had never visited. The whole existence of the foreign commissioners and the Governor's family was concen-

trated on the small north-western portion of the island between James Town and Sir Hudson Lowe's residence. Further towards the east, at a distance of about three miles from Plantation House, lay the zone surrounding Villa Longwood, where Napoleon lived. Of course it was impossible to drive there. But the southern and the south-eastern parts of the island were unknown to the De Balmains. The English officers, who knew the island well, advised the young couple—with that slightly bantering and envious tone of affection in which all addressed them—to go to Diana Peak, Fisher's Valley, in the eastern part of the island, which lay beyond Napoleon's territory, and if possible to admire the view over the ocean from the "King and Queen." It is true that the road was difficult, mountainous, and in places even dangerous, owing to its steepness. But the officers advised them to leave the Governor's carriage and to go part of the way on foot.

On this spring morning all seemed beautiful to De Balmain: the warm sunny weather; the gentle breeze that wafted the

invigorating salt of the ocean to his breast; the silly little song that Teeshka, who was driving them, was humming; the silly chatter of his young wife; the thoughts that came hurrying in disorder but joyfully to his clear mind, and the misty hopes for the future. When he looked at the pretty girl sitting next to him, when he felt the loving touch of her tiny cool hand, he expected—and, to his astonishment, was unable to find in himself—the familiar feeling of the intoxication of love. Yes, of course it was not what it had been *formerly*. But the present was not so bad after all.

His doubts dispersed. Life was not finished. At the age of thirty-nine he had quite unexpectedly discovered a new and a fairly amusing chapter in a book that had become thoroughly tiresome. The future had also new chapters in store for him: his Russian estates; the hospitable life of a landowner, at which, for some unknown reason, he had always laughed; the dull hospitable Russian nobility whom he had despised (in duty bound as a European) but whom in reality he loved with

his heart's blood, as every man loves the hearth where his childhood was passed, however much he may have disavowed it, however far he may have gone from it.

"Now to live for a short time an animal life in the country (*la vie animale* is very pleasant), and then to settle down in a handsome, stylish mansion in Petersburg (yes, certainly in Petersburg—it's a much finer town than Moscow), to quit the homeless life of a diplomatist, to lose the reputation of being a Casanova (what sort of a Casanova can one be after marriage!) and become a personage as soon as possible —a personage of importance—but, first of all, to forget the terrible delirium of those sleepless nights, with all its Freemasonry, the life beyond the grave, and the immortality of the soul."

De Balmain looked around him, he smiled at Susie, drew in a deep breath of sea air, and thought at that moment he took very little interest in the immortality of the soul or the life beyond the grave.

"It is very probable that the near future will belong to the conspirators of this Union. After having looked round, after

having weighed the chances, perhaps it will be necessary to join them—of course not in their Masonic dreams, but in their preparation for serious, political work. First, through Rzhevsky, I must become intimate with Pestel, who is evidently chief among them. They require men, especially men like me who know all the ins and outs of Europe, her political workers, and all their visible and secret relations to each other. Who in the new free Russia could be a better Minister for Foreign Affairs than I could?"

Alexander Antonovich represented to himself with great clearness how he would appear before Nesselrode, in the name of the new government, to demand the transfer to himself of all the work of the department: Nesselrode's dissatisfaction and confusion at this afforded De Balmain real satisfaction. He did not like Nesselrode.

"Darling, how do you say 'summer' in Russian?"

"How do I say what in Russian?" De Balmain asked mechanically. " 'Summer'? *Lêto,* darling."

"How do you spell it, darling?"

The Count told her.

"Oh, this awful *yat*. . . ."

The young Countess de Balmain was learning the Russian language with extraordinary zeal, heroically overcoming her truly British linguistic incapacity. She always carried about with her a pink copy-book in which she wrote Russian words, and repeated them at all sorts of moments when De Balmain least expected it. Susie was preparing for her life in Russia, and was already a thorough Russian patriot: she had already nearly quarrelled with Sir Hudson by asserting that the Russians had almost done as much for the defeat of Napoleon as the English; and she loved the Emperor Alexander as much as her own new King George. She had the portraits of both monarchs hanging in her room, to De Balmain's great dissatisfaction. He could not bear the self-satisfied alcholic countenance of George IV. The portrait of the Emperor Alexander was hanging in the place of greatest importance, because he was now their monarch (in the depths of her heart Susie still loved

King George best). De Balmain laughed when he thought that if he joined the conspiracy against the Tsar, it would be difficult enough to make Susie understand what it was all about; and when at last she did understand it, she would perhaps be very dissatisfied.

"Your Excellency, farther this way is Longwood," Teeshka said as he turned round on the coach-box and smilingly pointed in that direction with his whip. "Do you wish me to drive you to pay a visit to Napoleon?"

"What does he say, darling?" Susie asked.

De Balmain translated the words for her.

"Oh, Teeshka! . . . How do you spell 'Teeshka,' darling?"

"It's getting tiresome, these 'how do you spell's,' " De Balmain thought, and he was about to explain to her how "Teeshka" was written, but Susie's interest had already turned to something else. The sentry who was pacing backwards and forwards at a little distance called to them, but recognizing the Governor's carriage, he saluted and

continued to walk about. Everywhere on the island of Saint Helena there were sentry-boxes, guard-houses, and observation points. Susie asked her husband to explain to her the whole system of the way in which Boney was guarded. De Balmain, who owing to his duties knew every detail of this system by heart, was very pleased to satisfy her curiosity; from time to time he had to speak to his wife, and he caught eagerly at this thankful and easy subject. Susie learned with great satisfaction that besides her stepfather and her husband, Boney was guarded by three infantry regiments, an enormous number of batteries, a company of dragoons, three frigates, two corvettes, and six smaller vessels. By a complicated system of signalling it was possible, at the first alarm, to call out the whole of the garrison and squadron that were stationed there exclusively for the purpose of guarding the famous prisoner.

"All that for one man! How terrible he must be!" Susie said, frowning. Once in her life she had seen Napoleon, who, meeting her in the garden, had sent her some sweets and a rose.

Here De Balmain thought it was the right moment to kiss away the frowns on his wife's brow. Susie blushed scarlet and looked towards Teeshka. At that moment they both remembered that the officers had recommended them to leave their carriage and go part of the way on foot. Alexander Antonovich ordered Teeshka to stop, and to wait for them at that place: the horses were tired.

"We could go on farther. It's still a long way to the sea. You won't find the road," Teeshka said.

"We shall find it all right. And if we don't we can ask the fishermen."

Indeed fishermen were often to be found on the sea near the "King and Queen" and in the river which flowed into it near that point.

Alexander Antonovich took Susie's arm and led her into a grove, trying to walk as staidly as he could. Teeshka looked after them, smiled, and lit his pipe.

Half an hour later De Balmain and Susie were seated on the grass on the banks of a narrow winding stream that ran through the grove. Susie, looking con-

fused and happy, was resting her head on her husband's shoulder, who lazily had his arm round her waist. They decided not to go on to the "King and Queen." There really was nothing interesting in gazing at the sea, which they would soon have constantly to admire from the ship for two months. Susie looked at her husband and thought that no better man could be found in the whole world—such a splendid man: even King George could not be better. De Balmain sat lazily trying to recall his former pleasant thoughts, and to remember what had been most pleasant in them. Recollecting the course his reflections had taken, he decided that the pleasantest vision had been the confused and troubled look on tiny Nesselrode's face when he had to hand over to him the affairs of his department: De Balmain suddenly felt that he wanted terribly to be the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire, and to receive in his house at a rout the diplomatic corps.

"Look here," Susie said, pointing at the water, "what pretty little fish!"

The water of the shallow stream was

quite transparent, and the rapid movements of the numberless little fish were distinctly seen in it.

"It is time to go," De Balmain said tenderly, concealing a yawn, and, putting his arm round his wife, he lifted her from the ground.

Susie rose unwillingly from the grass; she shook herself and gently removed some petals that had stuck to her husband's clothes. Arm in arm they went along the bank of the stream, which, hidden by trees, took a sudden turn in the grove. De Balmain, lazily bending over Susan, kissed her sometimes on the back of her neck, sometimes on the cheek. At the turn of the stream he stopped.

"Somebody is sitting there."

Just round the corner, on the bank of the stream, there really was a man reclining against the low stump of a tree that had been cut very smooth.

"He's a fisherman," Susie said. "Never mind, darling."

She wanted to continue the amusing game.

But the man beyond the bend of the

river was not a fisherman. He was lying on the grass, looking attentively at the water. The stump concealed most of his figure with the exception of his left hand, on which his bent head was resting. This man was occupied in a strange and silly way. Near his elbow, on the stump, a small heap of carefully arranged, little, dark grey pebbles was lying. Without changing the position of his body, he took them one by one with his right hand, and after attentively taking aim he threw them into the water. The fish, frightened by the fall of the stones, scudded away in all directions—and it was apparent by the movement of the elbow and shoulder of this unknown observer that his whole body was shaken with laughter.

"Oh, what a silly man," Susie said.

Alexander Antonovich shuddered slightly and stared past the side of the stump at the small white hand that was throwing stones into the water. Suddenly the half-recumbent man, while taking another pebble from the heap, lowered his elbow—and a cry died away on De Balmain's lips.

He had recognized Napoleon.

"Boney," Susie murmered in an agitated whisper, starting back in horror, and seizing her husband's hand, she was ready to sacrifice herself in order to save him, at all costs, from destruction.

Alexander Antonovich stood for a moment as if benumbed, and then rushed back on tiptoe. He almost ran, without saying a single word. A thousand thoughts, heavy as millstones, entered his mind; the light seemed to be extinguished; a moment before, all had been brightly illuminated.

"What nonsense! . . . What miserable nonsense all these thoughts were: career, conspiracy, Pestel, Nesselrode. . . . That man who is throwing pebbles into the water was the master of the world. . . . All is emptiness. . . . All is falsehood. . . . All is deceit. . . . There is no life. . . . There is nothing. . . . Nothing remains. . . . Susie? *He* possessed the most beautiful of women. . . . Life is over. . . . Old age . . . And bound, bound for ever, to this silly little girl who for some reason or other is now hanging on my arm. . . .

"Darling, what is the matter? Quelle est la matière? He can't do anything to us. He does not see us. There are three infantry regiments here," Susie said in perplexity, hardly able to keep pace with her husband.

De Balmain did not answer.

Teeshka drove boldly towards them.

As she sat down in the calash Susie, almost in tears, gazed with pity on the drawn face of her lord and master. Count de Balmain, without looking at his wife, was nervously tearing his glove, and with twitching cheeks kept repeating aloud some incomprehensible words which were evidently Russian. The only one of them that the Countess could make out was the word *"mat' "*—"mother"—which was well known to her. The other Russian words were not to be found in her pink copy-book, and Susie had never heard them before. Nevertheless their groom Teeshka evidently knew and loved those Russian words. He turned round on the coach-box and, looking at his master, burst into fits of joyous laughter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NAPOLEON'S days were drawing to a close.

It was the fourth year of his sojourn on the island of Saint Helena. The events in this period of the life of the dethroned Emperor were few in number and outwardly of but a trivial nature.

At first Napoleon cherished the hope of regaining his throne. Cold calculation showed the entire impossibility of the realization of this hope. But the late master of the world had long ceased to see the line that separates the possible from the impossible. His whole life had been like a fairy-tale, and the island of Saint Helena, like the island of Elba, might be a short, but not the last, chapter of it. Napoleon followed the political events happening in Europe as attentively as formerly. All went on badly and dully without him—this comforted him very much.

But the new books and the newspapers which were brought to the island, and also the accounts given by the people who arrived there, and whom his suite hastened to question, all proved that the world was quiet: people were tired of wars and revolutions, and Napoleon could do nothing with tired people. His very flight, if such flight could prove possible, could not restore to him power over the thoroughly weary world—the world that had been wearied by him.

Besides, in his exile he himself had grown tired. The world was wearied by his deeds, and he was weary because he had no more deeds to do. The enormous reserves of energy which he had brought with him into exile, the reserves that had not been expended in sixty battles, in the conquest of universal power, and in its loss, were soon exhausted by dullness, which he experienced for the first time. And although, as formerly, he was able to work for twenty hours out of the twenty-four, reading several books one after the other, or dictating the history of a quarter of a century without resting for a day and

a night; although his phenomenal memory served him as formerly; although after all the misfortunes that had befallen him, his experience of politics and of men was immeasurably greater, the stamp of weary hopelessness pressed more heavily on the mighty soul of Napoleon.

To this was afterwards added disease—slow, implacable, painful disease. The first time he felt a burning sting in his right side, just as if a thin, narrow, heated *razor-blade* had penetrated to the depth of two inches, he understood at once that it was *death*—that his legendary life was coming to an end—not a legendary end, though, but an ordinary one, such as all have; just such an end as his father had had when he died at the age of thirty-five, also from a *razor* in his right side. His heart grew somewhat cold. But he told nobody about it.

Now but one thing remained to be done: *mourir en Napoléon.*

That same day, one of those who were closely attached to his person informed him with joy that according to the information in the newspapers a revolution might be

expected to break out in France any day, as the cup of the nation's patience was overflowing with the Bourbons: it was necessary, therefore, to organize a good and real plan for his escape from the island of Saint Helena. "Your Majesty might certainly escape concealed in a basket of linen, which the servants would afterwards carry on board a ship."

The Emperor did not say a word, but looked with a cold and strange gaze above the counsellor's head. It was not worth while answering: a clever man ought to be able to feel that Napoleon could not escape in a basket of linen. But chiefly because there was nowhere to escape to now.

After that the Emperor's health seemed to improve. But one day, strolling along the geranium walk with the marshal of his palace, Bertrand, he stopped at the edge of the ravine where three willows grew and where a clear little stream of cold water flowed past them. From this point the sea could be seen in the distance through the clefts of the rocks. This was a pretty but sad spot, that resembled a valley in France. Resting on his straight

strong stick that had no knob, Napoleon stood long, silently gazing at the trees, at the stream, at the sea beyond, and more especially at a small flat piece of ground at the foot of those three drooping willows. Then, raising his head, he said abruptly to Bertrand, pointing to the spot with his stick,

"Bertrand, when I die my body must be buried here."

The marshal of the palace shuddered at the unexpectedness of this speech.

"Your majesty will outlive me," he said, trying to assume the tone of a respectful joke. "The condition of Your Majesty's health . . ."

Looking at Napoleon's face, he did not finish his sentence, but closed his eyes and with a bow showed that His Majesty's sacred will would be executed exactly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE exiled Emperor was greatly bored by the retinue that surrounded him. Napoleon was always distinguished for the eager interest he took in people, which was strangely combined in him with entire contempt of them. During his life he had known countless numbers of all sorts of people, and the professional necessity of fathoming and appraising each new person in a few minutes had developed in the Emperor a special manner of questioning them: *he struck the man with a hammer* in order to discover by the sound what that man was made of. Napoleon seldom made a mistake; his innate knowledge of men was so great, and it had been so enormously developed by his vast experience of life. All trembled so much before the reputation he had acquired of being an infallible reader of men's souls, that it was

only the greatest masters of the art—such as Talleyrand and Fouché—who ever tried to deceive him, and even they tried but seldom.

During his exile in the island of Saint Helena, the Emperor saw the same people day after day. Las Cases's anecdotes about the old court, Montholom's rich imagination, the warlike adventures of Gourgaud, and the silent dullness that was exhaled from General Bertrand, had all become odious to him. The want of occupation and the tedium of the island caused those who surrounded Napoleon constantly to quarrel among themselves; they saw rivals in each other, as they were all living on account of the Emperor's posthumous fame.

Napoleon had a very decided opinion of the feelings that he inspired in those who had accompanied him into exile. These people were devoted to him in their own way, but almost all of them had personal motives that had caused them to leave France and come to the distant island of Saint Helena. Their very looks, and the expression on their countenances, bore wit-

ness to the extent of the sacrifice they had made to His Majesty. Some of them showed their devotion more artfully and cleverly, like Count de Las Cases, an unsuccessful writer who had come to the island of Saint Helena chiefly with the view of publishing an immortal book, compiled from his conversations with Napoleon. Others were not distinguished for subtlety. General Gourgaud bored the Emperor mostly by the jealous devotion which caused him to assert with great insistence that he had saved His Majesty's life at the battle of Brienne by shooting a Cossack at the moment when he was about to pierce the Emperor's unprotected breast with his pike. This story Gourgaud had had engraved on the blade of his sword. Napoleon knew very well that no Cossack had ridden up to him with a pike on the day of the Battle of Brienne. However, he did not deny it, and usually nodded in a friendly manner as he listened for the hundredth time to the story of his wonderful escape; but once Gourgaud told the famous episode on a bad day, when Napoleon's diseased liver was making itself acutely felt, and at

the point of the story when "the son of the steppes fell to the ground at the feet of the mighty sovereign on whom he had dared to raise his audacious hand," the Emperor remarked morosely that he was quite unable to imagine how all that could have happened, as on that day he had not once seen either a Cossack with a pike or Gourgaud with a pistol.

"Les bras m'en tombent!" Gourgaud exclaimed, and he almost began to cry from grief. For a long time he had believed his own story, and he was extremely disconcerted with such ingratitude on the part of his Majesty.

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These people had been thrown overboard, and were clinging to the shipwrecked Emperor, vaguely believing in his star, and that it was impossible for him to be drowned. Months and years passed—still no wonder occurred, and the number of followers diminished. Las Cases left, Gourgaud left. Napoleon thought, especially in his worst moments, that most of the people who remained were await-

ing his death with impatience; it would give them liberty again and permit them to return to Europe surrounded by an aureole of devotion to the grave. They probably laid great hopes on the Emperor's will. At that time there were persistent reports circulated about fabulous riches that Napoleon had concealed in Europe. These reports were greatly exaggerated. During the last years of his reign the Emperor had spent on the wars several hundred millions of his own property—that is to say, of the money belonging to the French treasury he had formerly ordered to be transferred to his private account. Napoleon purposely encouraged these reports about his concealed riches, and he sometimes made mysterious promises to those around him, owing to which he thought that their hearts would melt with joy, and that they would become more *faithful* to him and await his death with more willingness and greater impatience. Besides, the Emperor hardly ever reproached those who surrounded him about anything, either in words or even to himself: for a long time

past he had not only seen in people living facts—and in the majority of cases very nasty facts. Seriously to blame a man for being bad, selfish, or stupid seemed as unnatural to the exile of Saint Helena as it would be to blame an animal for its animal instincts. The people who had followed Napoleon into exile were necessary to him, and notwithstanding all their insignificance, his existence would have been worse and more unbearable without them. But from the long experience of a ruler he did not prevent them gossiping or intriguing. He listened benevolently and even with interest to all the bad things they had to say of each other—the Emperor was almost always ready to believe anything bad about people—and when he was alone with them, he gave each one to understand that he prized him much more than any of the others. And then he reconciled them—otherwise they would have run away.

In order to divert himself and his suite he began to dictate the history of his campaigns. But he soon understood that others would write it better and more ad-

vantageously for him: he himself saw too clearly the part chance had played in all his undertakings, both in the unfulfilled expectations and in the unexpected successes. He understood perfectly well that the historians would find in each of his actions a deep meaning, and the part played by chance in his destiny would be reduced to a minimum. Posterity would not judge him by words and explanations, but by his fateful, fantastic, and mysterious destiny.

At first he thought that in the process of reconstructing the past he would find an answer to the question where, when, and in what he had committed the fatal mistake that had caused his destruction. But gradually it became clear to him that the answer to that question was not worth seeking. Many of his undertakings might appear to humanity as the chief cause of his undoing; but he knew very well how closely each of them was linked with a thousand other actions, intentions, and plans which with equal justice might be accounted as fatal. In the depth of his soul he arrived at the positive conclusion

that he was ruined not by any single political failure or military mistake, or by a thousand mistakes and failures; he was ruined because he, one man, wanted to rule the whole world, and this was impossible even with his luck and with his genius.

CHAPTER NINE

He lived a very retired life; he seldom received any travellers, and he was acquainted with but few of the aristocrats of the island. According to an anecdote that was told in Saint Helena, the local colony got news about General Bonaparte only from the European newspapers.

However, during the first years of his exile on the island the Emperor made a friend. This friend was a fourteen-year-old girl, Betsy Balcome, the daughter of one of the merchants of the island on whose estate Napoleon resided while the Villa Longwood was being built. His acquaintance with this gay and frolicsome girl began as soon as he arrived on the island. One day, quite unexpectedly, a party of horsemen arrived at the Balcombes' house, the Briars, and the news instantly spread that a small adjoining

pavilion on the estate had been requisitioned for General Bonaparte. Betsy rushed headlong into the garden. A man in a green French uniform, with a large star on his breast, was riding slowly up to their porch on a beautiful horse; he was accompanied by the English Admiral, Sir George Cockburn, and several members of his suite. Betsy felt at once that out of the whole party of riders this man was the only one worth looking at. The girl was struck by the unusual pallor of his face, its beauty, and the constantly changing expression of the eyes. He jumped off his horse and hastened into the house. Betsy could not believe that this man who was going to live in the house next to theirs was—bad Boney. Soon afterwards the Admiral and his suite rode away. All realized the historical character of the moment, and hastened to leave the great man to his own profound and sorrowful thoughts. People walked about the house on tiptoe. But only a few minutes later the General still in his green uniform, came out of the house humming the well-

known song "Fra Martino" and went into the garden, where he sat down on a bench near a bed of white roses. From behind a bush Betsy gazed with attentive eyes at the terrible General. He sat gently tapping his Hessian boots with his riding-whip and continued to hum: "Fra Martino suona la campana" . . . Suddenly a dry branch crackled under Betsy's feet. The man in the green uniform looked round, and seeing the pretty girl trying to hide behind the bush and looking at him with frightened eyes, he rose and went towards her.

"What is the capital of France?" he said in a sepulchral voice when he was quite close to her.

"Paris," Betsy whispered, trembling with fear.

"Italy?"

"Rome."

"Russia?"

"Now it's Petersburg, formerly it was Moscow."

"What's become of Moscow?" the Emperor said in a still more terrible voice.

and he fixed his dreadful eyes on the girl.

"It was burnt," Betsy answered, though she was scarcely able to control herself.

"Who burnt Moscow? Eh?"

"Bo—— I don't know. . . . The Russians. . . ."

"*I* burnt Moscow!" the Emperor roared and, dishevelling his hair with his hands, he then spread the fingers of both hands and moved towards Betsy. The girl shrieked and ran away. She was pursued by Napoleon's gay, ringing laughter.

The next day they were fast friends. Betsy's boldness went even to the length of asking her new friend to play cards with her. The Emperor consented, but he said firmly that he would play only if it was for money.

"Betsy, how much money have you?" he asked in the most businesslike way.

Betsy had not much money; she possessed in all only one pagoda.

Napoleon agreed to play for a pagoda. They sat down at a table. During the first deal Betsy noticed with indignation that the Emperor cheated.

"Shame!" she exclaimed.

"You are telling lies," Napoleon answered coolly. "You yourself are cheating. I am playing very honestly."

And he demanded the pagoda. Count de Las Cases said with a courtier's smile that these winnings would perhaps reconcile His Majesty to the loss of the three hundred millions in gold he had left in the cellars of the palace in Paris. However, Betsy flatly refused to pay, saying that her partner had not played fairly. Then Napoleon took up Betsy's best dress that was lying spread out on the bed and in which she was to go to her first ball at Admiral Cockburn's, and without any signs of pity he carried it off to his own rooms, despite all Betsy's prayers. The philosopher Las Cases thought that this extraordinary man must certainly have an unlimited supply of courage.

In this way he would pass whole hours with Betsy, this girl of fourteen. He teased her, slapped her, pulled her ears, and consoled her with valuable presents. After the first few days he knew all about her relations; he heard whom each of her aunts had married, and in what goods all

her uncles dealt, and how much each of her cousins would get as dowry, and many other things that were equally necessary for him, but about which he inquired in the most careful manner and then never forgot—in his memory everything was imprinted for ever. Many years afterwards Elisabeth Abell, the former Betsy Balcome, told Napoleon III with embarrassment about her long conversations with the exile of Saint Helena. The Emperor told her all sorts of cock-and-bull stories about himself, at which she opened her eyes wide with horror—and he laughed like a little child. Betsy was chiefly troubled about the question of his religion.

"Pourquoi avez-vous tourné Turc?" she once asked him.

Napoleon could not understand this phrase, which was literally translated from English. When, at last, it appeared that Betsy wanted to know why he had embraced the Turkish faith when he was in Egypt, the Emperor confirmed the report of his conversation to the Mohammedan religion, and he added that he always

accepted the religion of the country in which he was.

"What a shame!" Betsy cried, getting red with indignation. But she was beginning not to believe entirely all that Boney told her about himself.

Owing to her friendship with Napoleon, Betsy Balcome became a European celebrity. The newspapers of all the countries of Europe wrote about her, and the inhabitants of the island, who sometimes met this strange pair walking about together, looked on her as a wonder, of which she was very proud.

Once when walking with Napoleon and Las Cases, Betsy met an old friend of hers, an old Malay gardener called Toby. Betsy introduced him to the Emperor.

Las Cases, smiling at His Majesty, asked the Malay in very choice English what the feelings were that the vicinity of the Emperor inspired in him.

"It is scarcely possible, dear Toby, that you could ever have imagined that one day you would converse with the Great

Man whose fame is spread over the whole universe."

But the choice language of Las Cases was, to his great surprise, all in vain, as the old Malay had never even heard the name of Bonaparte.

Betsy was also confused.

"He did not understand," she exclaimed in defence of her friend. "Toby, how is it possible you have not heard about the man who conquered the whole world?"

"He conquered the world by the strength of his terrible ordnance," Count Las Cases added, "and subdued it with his genius, establishing order, exalting power, and giving solemnity to religion."

Then Toby understood about whom they were speaking and began joyfully to nod his head. Doubtless the good gentlemen and the good miss meant the great and terrible Rajah Seri-Tri-Buvana, the Djangdy of the kingdom of Menangkabou, who subdued all the Rajahs, the Lamponggese, the Bataks, the Dyaks, the Sundanese, the Mankasars, the Buginese, and the Alfurs, brought peace to the Malayan lands, and introduced the worship of the

crocodile. But this celebrated man had died long ago.

Las Cases laughed gracefully, as the courtiers of the eighteenth century had laughed in the hall of the Œil-de-Bœuf in the palace of Versailles, and said that His Majesty had at one time evidently had a dangerous rival. Napoleon, however, listened to his joke somewhat morosely. He ordered that the Malay should be given twenty gold pieces, and then turned abruptly away.

At the end of their walk, when they were approaching the house, the Emperor suddenly interrupted Las Cases, who was relating an anecdote of life at the old court, and asked curtly:

"Do you know if there are many of them?"

"Of whom, Your Majesty?" Las Cases asked, puzzled.

"Of these Malays," Napoleon answered angrily.

Las Cases replied that as far as he knew the Malay race could be counted by millions.

"The deuce it can!" the Emperor grum-

bled. "Seri-Tri-Buvana . . . What the devil does this mean?" and he entered his pavilion.

In the society of grown-up people—in 1818 Betsy returned to Europe with her family—the Emperor was dry and silent. He preferred solitude, and often passed whole days without leaving his rooms, and hardly opening his lips to anyone. Sometimes as a recreation, when driving along the narrow and dangerous roads round the Devil's Punch-bowl on the very edge of the precipice, he would order his undaunted coachman, Archambaud, to drive his team of three horses at full speed, and in this way procure for himself the illusion of his former gamble with life and death; at others, for some unknown reason he would shoot from his window at the sheep and goats belonging to the Longwood farm, to the great despair of the people who had charge of them. But the greater part of the day and the long sleepless nights Napoleon passed in his room, lying on the sofa that was surrounded by books, reading, or else sitting in a hot bath, in which he usually passed several hours

every day—sometimes he even lunched and dined in the water. While in the bath the *razor* was not so sharp, and his thoughts were not so terrible.

One of his followers—he who with all his shortcomings was sincerely devoted to the Emperor and who remained with him until the end of his days—he whom he called his son—had a pretty wife. In the last years of his life Napoleon cast his tired fancy on her. On the island of Saint Helena this woman gave birth to a daughter whose face bore an extraordinary resemblance to Napoleon. From the thought that perhaps the only man in the world who had remained faithful to him to the grave, had fallen a victim to his last cold whim—from this thought the terrible and devilish impulse that had smouldered within Napoleon during his whole life was slightly aroused.



CHAPTER TEN

A CALASH drove up to the perron of Villa Longwood, from which a short, stout man alighted. The Counts Bertrand and Montholon, who were sitting side by side on one of the wooden benches in the garden, fixed their eyes on him with curiosity. The Counts were feeling bored: that day they had already had time to say all the unpleasant things they could think of to each other, and they were now trying to shorten the long forenoon by sitting together and from time to time exchanging remarks concerning the weather.

The visitor took off his hat when he was still at a considerable distance, and when he had come up to them he asked in the French language, which, however, resembled more Italian, if he could see the "Grand Maréchal du Palais."

"I am he, sir," Bertrand answered.

The fat man bowed again and presented his visiting card, naming himself at the same time. He was an Italian Marquis who was returning to his country from Brazil, and with tears in his eyes he entreated to be presented to the Emperor Napoleon. A few minutes' talk with the greatest man in the world would make him the happiest of men; he knew that he had no right to expect such a favour—but surely Eccellenza would not refuse him?

Bertrand twirled the card about in his hand, unable to decide how to act. He was very desirous to gratify the wish of their visitor: the request had been made in the most respectful terms, according to all the rules established at Longwood, through the Marshal of the Palace, and with mention of the Imperial title. The Marquis, who bore a sounding name, evidently had connections—otherwise he would not have been allowed to come up there. Such a visit would certainly be very disagreeable to Sir Hudson Lowe. All this spoke in favour of the gratification

of his request. But on the other hand, how could the Emperor be disturbed? He was morose and not feeling well.

"His Majesty is feeling very unwell," Bertrand began, and stopped when he saw the expression of the last degree of despair that appeared on the Marquis's benevolent countenance.

"What a misfortune!" the fat man exclaimed, and he caught hold of his head as if he had heard his death sentence.

"It is quite natural," Montholon added. "How can the Emperor escape being ill in this climate and with these surroundings?"

"*Their* object is to do him to death," Bertrand continued with a bitter smile.

"Barbarissimi!" the Marquis exclaimed again. "To do to death the liberator of Italy! Damned Francesco! Damned Austrians!"

The Marshal of the Palace was pleased at the fat man's indignation, but his last exclamation caused him some embarrassment. He explained to their guest that although the sins of the Emperor Franz against his Imperial son-in-law were very great, still the chief cause of His Majesty's

misfortune was the treachery of the English government.

"You are quite right!" the Marquis cried impetuously, and he pressed the Count's hand warmly. "Oh, those damned Austrians!"

And he explained in eloquent words that the hour was not far distant when the whole of the Italian nation would rise against their oppressors and would overthrow their bloodthirsty Francesco.

Bertrand was still more embarrassed.

"I shall try to announce to His Majesty—" he said with an important glance at the Marquis, as if he were inviting him to appraise the value of the enormous favour that perhaps might soon be accorded him. This indecisive promise was instantly strengthened by the inexpressible gratitude that showed itself on the Italian's face—it was as if his life had just been saved, and in addition he had had a fortune given him. This expression quite softened Bertrand's heart, and he decided that something must be done for their visitor.

"I don't know if His Majesty will re-

ceive you," he said. "But it will interest you to see the Villa Longwood. I will show you the Emperor's bedchamber."

The Italian uttered a low cry of delight as Bertrand let him into the house by a side door. Napoleon's bedchamber, scented with Houbigant's pastilles, was a two-windowed room, and like the rest of Villa Longwood offered to the eye a strange mixture of luxury and wretchedness. The things which the Emperor's attendants had been able to take with them when they left France, astonished by their magnificence and richness. All the rest—indeed the house itself—was simple and poverty-stricken. Next to a chair that had been coarsely knocked together by the local joiner stood a wash-hand-basin of massive silver; on a cheap table a priceless dressing-case was lying open, and the common grey mantelpiece was decorated with several cups which were original works of art. The Marquis with hardly audible, suppressed cries went from object to object. He had in his pocket a specially prepared notebook, but he found it awkward to make use of it here; he did

not know what was permissible and what was not allowed, and with his whole might he tried to remember everything—everything—in order to write it all down as soon as his carriage drove away from Longwood. The sole object of the fat gentleman's visit to this celebrated place where fate had landed him, was to collect subjects of conversation for the rest of his life. Bertrand, in the tone of a guide, mentioned in a whisper all the most remarkable things to be found in the room.

"The King of Rome, the work of Thibault"—he pointed to the portrait of a child riding on a goat, and the eyes of the Marshal of the Palace became wet with tears at the thought of Napoleon's little son.

"Il re di Roma!" the Marquis groaned.

"Her Majesty the Empress Maria Louisa, the work of Isabey," continued Bertrand, this time with manifest disapproval, but with a severe glance that forbade the visitor, even in thought, to touch on the family drama that was connected with this portrait. "His Majesty's watch. The chain is made of the

Empress's plaited hair. . . . An alarum-clock that belonged to King Frederick the Great. The Emperor took it as a keepsake at the time of the occupation of Potsdam by the French troops."

"La sveglia del grande Federico!" the Italian piped, and stretched his hand towards the notebook but checked himself in time.

"The Emperor did not take the sword of Frederick II, but he had presented to him by the Spaniards, the Persians, and the Turks the swords of Francis I, Jengiz-Khan, and Tamerlane. He also had," Bertrand said with a simper, "the most celebrated of all—his own sword. . . . This is his Majesty's camp-bed"—and he pointed to a narrow bed with pale green silk curtains. "The Emperor slept on it the eve of Marengo and Austerlitz. An extra bed is there—*in his study,*" the Marshal of the Palace said in a still lower voice, showing by the glance he took in that direction that there *in his study* Napoleon was probably to be found.

"Why has he an extra bed?" the Marquis asked timidly.

Bertrand looked sternly at his guest.

"The Emperor sleeps in two beds. He changes from one to the other during the night."

Finding that the visitor had now seen enough, the Marshal of the Palace led him back. Through an open door, the Marquis noticed in a small adjoining room a huge wooden box lined with zinc.

"His Majesty's bath," Bertrand explained in answer to the Italian's query. "In the Tuileries Palace," he added, "His Majesty had quite another sort of bath."

They entered the reception room.

"Have the goodness to wait for me here. I will announce you to His Majesty at once."

Count Bertrand went out of the room, leaving their visitor alone, in a state not far removed from bewilderment.

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"Send him to the devil!" Napoleon said gloomily, when the Marshal of the Palace had informed him of the Italian Marquis's request.

The Emperor was seated in an arm-chair

covered with a plaid. A book was lying on his knee but he was not reading. His eyes were fixed on something in the far distance.

Bertrand sighed, bowed his head, and went towards the door. He would probably have repeated in those very words His Majesty's reply.

"Who is he?" Napoleon asked sharply, when the Marshal of the Palace was already opening the door.

Count Bertrand reported the impression the Marquis had made on him in extremely glowing colours. "A most well-intentioned and respectful man who has connections. He may be very useful in enlightening European public opinion. . . . He is sure to report to the journalists of Europe with great exactitude whatever Your Majesty will be pleased to tell him."

Napoleon looked at Bertrand in silence for a long time. It was evident that though he greatly disliked seeing new faces, he ought to receive the Marquis and send him some biting words, through him, to the European monarchs and their ministers. The compartment in Napoleon's

brain where he stored various offensive and stinging remarks that were only awaiting an opportunity to be presented to the sovereigns of Europe, opened of its own accord. Evidently the contents of that compartment overcame the Emperor's hesitation.

"I shall receive this man. Bring him in here in two minutes."

"Oui, sire," Bertrand said joyfully, and retired with the bow which had been taught him in the good old times by the actor Talma, who instructed the courtiers in good manners and the plastic arts.

"An Italian Marquis; a Florentine, and coming from Brazil."

The Emperor's memory furnished him automatically with various information and observations about the Italian aristocracy, Florence, Brazil, all that might, and for some reason would be necessary to astonish this man, for the million and first time, after having astonished a million other representatives of the human race that bored and had become immeasurably repugnant to him.

Slowly, with his accustomed power of

will, Napoleon wiped off his face the expression of boredom, weariness, and physical pain. He arranged a lock of silky hair on his massive brow, threw away his plaid, and crossed his arms. Some sort of spring seemed to remove the wrinkles and folds. His face grew hard, it became strong, but his eyes shone with a cold and ominous fire. It was that terrible mask that was known to every child in the world.

The door opened wide. The porter announcing the name of the visitor, in accordance with the etiquette of Longwood, in a loud voice, the Italian Marquis entered hurriedly and awkardly, and felt his heart sink within him for a moment as he met the eyes of the man who was seated in an arm-chair, and then he bent low in a respectful bow. He had expected to see a sick captive; instead the Emperor Napoleon was seated before his eyes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It was almost gay in Longwood.

The Emperor had revived. The conversation with the Italian traveller had excited him. However stupid their guest was—and he evidently was stupid—there could not be any doubt that he would write down every word said to him, and he would lose no time in reporting them as soon as he arrived in Europe. Many unpleasant things about the enemies of the exiled Emperor were said that day. After a short introductory talk Napoleon turned the conversation on the subject of politics, and quite casually mentioning the Emperor Alexander I, he said that in 1807 the Tsar had asked him to award a high decoration to General Benningsen, but he had refused to decorate the Russian Commander-in-Chief as it was repugnant to him for a son to ask a reward for his father's mur-

derer. He described how the expression on Alexander's face changed, for he understood by a broad hint the reason of this refusal. He said it was an unusually amusing sight to see the man who had sent murderers, who had been bought with English money, to his father, posing as a guardian of the morality of mankind. He said he was a fine monarch who could leave a nation of forty million souls to the tender mercies of such a monster as Arakcheev, and who had betrayed Speransky, the only statesman in the land, because he had not a sufficiently high opinion of his, Alexander's, mental capacities, while he himself read the Psalms with a set of German old women. He said that sooner or later Russia would lose Poland, that it was doubtful if she would retain Finland, and she would never get Constantinople. He said that all the other conquests of the Tsars were not worth a brass farthing, and that the whole of Russia would go to the devil one day through the faults of some mad despot. He said that the many millions of the elementary, ignorant Russian peoples might become a terrible danger to

the whole world, and that Europe would become either republican or Cossack. Having finished with Russia—he knew that the mention of Paul, Benningsen, and Speransky would greatly irritate the Tsar—Napoleon touched upon England, and expressed his astonishment that a country which traded in everything in the world had not learned how to trade in liberty, and export it to the continent which was so greatly in need of it. He made a short but highly characteristic sketch of the two Georges and of Lord Castlereagh, a characterization which would evidently be caught at by the whole of the British opposition Press. Then he referred to Talleyrand, and remarked that for this king of traitors a state of treachery was an entirely normal condition: il est toujours en état de trahison. He explained minutely the part that Talleyrand had taken in the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, purposely exaggerating his conduct in order to enhance the already burning hatred of the Royalists for this celebrated diplomatist. Then he passed on to the career of Fouché, first terrorist and regicide, then the faithful servant of

the Bourbons. He called him the most accomplished and consummate type of scoundrel that had ever existed on the earth, adding—to spite Louis XVIII—that only he, Napoleon, had nothing to fear from the services of such a rascal, because he knew how to treat him, and once, taking advantage of a good opportunity, he had said to him, "Monsieur Fouché, il pourrait être funeste pour vous que vous me prissiez pour un sot." He laughed at the Vienna Congress and at the Holy Alliance, the members of which, three little men, wanted despotically to rule over all the nations of the world, with the fescues of priests and sharpers, when even he, Napoleon, had not been able to rule the whole world. He said that the dispossessing him of his title of Emperor was simply stupid, as a title is only empty sound, and a throne is but a bit of wood covered with silk: he had fortunately something better than titles or thrones to show to posterity. He said that the monarchs, in wishing to insult him, had spat into each others' faces, because if he, Napoleon, was a monster, what could be said of them,

who had vied with each other in their attempts to catch his smiles, and had offered him in marriage the choice of their most illustrious princesses. He reminded them that his ante-room was crowded with European monarchs awaiting their turn to be received, and on the day of his marriage with the daughter of the Cæsars four kings had carried his bride's train. He said that the confiscation of his riches was simply a common criminal roguery, which, however, he did not regret in the slightest degree, as he wanted nothing: if he were starving he would not apply to the monarchs, but he would go to the 53rd Regiment, that was on duty near Longwood, and the common men of the English nation would doubtless share their bit of bread with the oldest soldier of Europe.

At these words, the Italian shed tears, and raised his hands to the sky. The result was achieved. After explaining all this to his guest, the Emperor led him to understand that he considered him quite an exceptional man, both with regard to understanding and character—and then he wished him God-speed on his way. For

more than half an hour, while driving back in his calash, the dazed Italian sat, writing down in his notebook every word he had heard and repeating from time to time: "What a man! What a wonderful man!"

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Napoleon was well satisfied with the conversation. He did not nourish any specially hostile feelings for Alexander, or Castlereagh, or Talleyrand, or Fouché. The thought of rivalry with them, although they had defeated him, never entered his mind. The Emperor never considered anybody equal to himself either in intellectual or spiritual power. He had long since ceased to have sympathies and antipathies—at least in his tranquil moments—and he was willing at any moment to establish the very best relations with each and every one of his countless enemies, if it were necessary for his own interests. Now his interests demanded nothing more. A more terrible enemy was standing at his shoulder than either England or Russia. But from the habits of long years, he still administered blows to

his enemies, and sometimes in the moments of his greatest irritation, which was caused by his diseased liver, Napoleon would vent his rage against mankind and his fate on whoever happened to be present; and it certainly was more seemly to wreck his anger on Alexander or Talleyrand than on Sir Hudson Lowe. The exiled Emperor could not help feeling that the petty strife with the Governor of the island of Saint Helena lent something of the ridiculous to the last years of his life. The best way to avoid being ridiculous was to conceal himself under an aureole of martyrdom, and Napoleon tried to maintain that aureole, though he knew very well that the Englishmen were behaving fairly correctly, and even if they had been less correct he could hardly reproach them with it, as he had quite other deeds on his own conscience.

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All became animated in Longwood: the Emperor had announced his intention of coming out to dine in the dining-room. The *maître d'hôtel,* in the green livery em-

broidered with gold, placed the heavy dishes of wrought silver on the shaky deal table, and after having chased away a rat from under the buffet, he took out of it the service "des quartiers généraux," a priceless Sèvres service, on which the artistic paintings represented Napoleon's victories. The mameluke Ali took up his post behind His Majesty's chair. This Ali was really called Louis Étienne Saint-Denis, and he was born in Versailles, but at one moment it had been a fancy of Napoleon's to convert him into a mameluke. Six flunkeys in livery, some of them Frenchmen and the others Englishmen, served at table and carried round the wines. The dinner, which was of seven courses, lasted less than half an hour. The Emperor was quite gay: he had ceased to feel the pain in his side, and it appeared to him, as it still sometimes happened, that the *razor* had disappeared, and that perhaps death was still distant. Napoleon tried two or three of the dishes—he usually ate scarcely anything—and then he ordered champagne to be brought.

After dinner they went to the drawing-

room, where coffee was served in small cups of another purple Sèvres service. Montholon set out the chess-men on a large brown table with a small chess-board painted in the middle. Napoleon moved a pawn—he played very badly and never thought of his moves—but he did not continue the game. That evening he wanted to talk. He was feeling in high spirits. Bertrand asked his Majesty to read aloud —one of Corneille's tragedies. The Marshal of the Palace liked that way of passing the evening, as he was able to doze for half an hour unobserved, then, waking up from time to time, to express his admiration for the genius of the poet and the reader. Napoleon began to talk about the relative merits of the tragedies of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, but, looking at his companions, he stopped. He was sorry that his exile was shared by uncultivated generals who could not appreciate the French tragedies, nor Dante, nor Ossian, and in general understood nothing but military affairs, into which they had not gone very deeply either. It would have been much better if he had taken

with him to the island of Saint Helena somebody like Denon or Arnault.

The conversation reverted to politics. Count Montholon asked if his Majesty thought the French Revolution might have been prevented.

"It would have been difficult—very difficult," Napoleon answered after a short pause. "It would have been necessary to kill the leaders and to give to the people part of what they had promised them. . . . Revolution—it is dirty manure from which a luxurious plant grows up. I conquered the Revolution because I understood it. I took from it all that was of value, and strangled the rest. And mark, I did this without having recourse to terror. Every fool can rule for a short time by numberless executions, as Robespierre had done. But it is unlikely that anybody but myself could have calmed France without the guillotine. Remember that time! A thousand-year-old monarchy had fallen to dust and ashes. . . . All was shattered—all was destroyed—all was soiled. I lifted my crown out of the gutter. . . ."

He fell into reflection.

"Yes, revolution is a terrible thing," he began again. "But it is a great power, because the hatred of the poor for the rich is great—revolutions always take place for the benefit of the poor—but the poor suffer from them more than anybody else. After Waterloo I could have saved my throne if I had incited the poor to rise against the rich. But I did not want to become the king of a *jacquerie*. . . . I had studied revolution at close quarters, and therefore I hated it, and yet I was born of it. Order is the greatest blessing of society. Those who did not live in 1793, those who have not seen the slaughter—the terror—the famine—are unable to understand what I did for France. All my victories are as nothing compared with the pacification of the Revolution. Nobody has ever looked as far into the future as I did at that time. Do you know what it is in politics to look forward? Fools talk of the past; clever men converse of the present; madmen try to interpret the future. A brave man generally despises the future. Subsequently I myself seldom looked forward for more than three or four months. I had learned

from experience how much the greatest events in the world depend upon His Majesty—Chance."

Count Montholon remarked respectfully that the ideologists would never be able to understand the great historical part His Majesty had played.

"Ideologists!" Napoleon said contemptuously. "Ideologists—advocates—that's a race I can't abide. Every time I see an advocate I feel sorry that people no longer have their tongues cut out. While the ideologists were making clever speeches, I was capturing fortune by great deeds. *Success* is the greatest orator in the world. Why have these advocates begun to occupy themselves with revolution? How much do they understand about it? In the time of revolution it is only possible to rule in Hessian boots and spurs. . . . It is true that besides Hessian boots you require a head: General Lafayette had only Hessian boots."

"The Hero of the Old and the New Worlds," Montholon said, pronouncing the popular nickname of the celebrated pro-

moter of the American and French Revolutions, with a sarcastic smile.

"The blockhead of the Old and New Worlds," the Emperor said angrily.

"He remained true to his old obsolete systems," Bertrand remarked.

Napoleon looked askance at Bertrand.

"It's a matter of head, not of systems. With regard to systems, you must always leave yourself the right to laugh to-morrow at what you affirm to-day."

And making an angry movement as if he were displeased with himself for talking of politics to people who evidently understood nothing about them, the Emperor began abruptly to talk about war, and asked the generals which of his campaigns was the most remarkable in their opinion.

"The Italian campaign," Bertrand answered, with great decision.

Napoleon's face grew brighter, but he shook his head.

"I was still too inexperienced at that time."

"La campagne de France, in 1814," Montholon gave as his opinion. "Mili-

tary history has no record of greater genius than was displayed in that lost campaign."

The Emperor shook his head again, and said that he himself considered the greatest of his military deeds was his little known manœuvre at Eckmühl. Then he began to explain to the generals the object of the manœuvre, giving the names of the regiments and divisions, the positions of the batteries, the number of the guns, the names of the commanders. Countess Bertrand said with surprise that it was really difficult to understand how His Majesty could remember all this after so many years.

"Madame, le souvenir d'un amant pour ses anciennes maîtresses," the Emperor said, with animation, turning quickly towards the Countess.



CHAPTER TWELVE

MONTHOLON, who was a drawing-room general, took advantage of these words to turn the conversation on more sportive themes. Napoleon remarked that love was folly committed by two; the only victory over love was flight. He himself had never loved any woman—perhaps Josephine, yes—but he had not loved even her very much.

Count Montholon, toning down the free nature of the subject with the sweetest and most respectful smile, began to enumerate all the celebrated beauties who had been favoured by His Majesty's passing fancy: Madame Fourès, Madame Grassini, Madame Leverd, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, Mademoiselle George, Madame de Vaudey, Mademoiselle Lacoste, Madame Gazzani, Mademoiselle Guillebeau, Mademoiselle Denuelle, Mademoiselle Bourgoin . . ."

"Thérèse Bourgoin? How so? I think you are mixing me up with Chaptal," the Emperor, who was listening with attention, interrupted at this point.

Montholon remarked, with a still more respectful smile, the whole of Paris had asserted that the Emperor was the rival of his minister, Chaptal. Even the following anecdote had gone the rounds of Paris society. "One evening at the very moment that Chaptal was presenting various papers for Your Majesty's signature, the officer on duty announced that Madame Bourgoin was waiting in the bedchamber. 'I've no time—she can come to-morrow. . . . All the same, let her undress,' Your Majesty ordered; 'perhaps I may come in about ten minutes.' Ten minutes after Chaptal left, and fifteen minutes later he had sent in his resignation."

"All the actresses of Paris set on foot reports of their intimacy with me. The managers paid them higher salaries on that account."

But Montholon's smile clearly showed that he believed the anecdote.

"You might as well quote from the pam-

phlet, *The Amatory Adventures of Bonaparte,* in which they make me out to be a sort of Hercules," the Emperor said, laughing.

Madame Bertrand, who found the conversation was becoming too free, asked if it were true that in his early youth His Majesty had proposed to a certain Mademoiselle Colombier.

"I did not propose, but I meant to. I was then only seventeen, and she preferred a certain Monsieur Bressieux, to whom I afterwards gave the title of baron out of joy that I had not married his wife."

"The same thing is told of the present Queen of Sweden," Montholon said, laughing. "It is said that Your Majesty gave to the Jew Bernadotte the throne of Gustav Vasa owing to the tender feelings you had had formerly for Mademoiselle Clary."

Napoleon's face grew dark. This woman, who had loved him tenderly in his youth, and whom at one time he had wished to marry, but had thought better of it, and whom, owing to qualms of conscience, he had exalted so high, had after-

wards carried on a political intrigue with Talleyrand and Fouché against him. . . . When he thought of this, the familiar feeling of aversion for everybody, especially for women, arose with new force in the Emperor's soul.

"Love is the occupation of idle society," he said gloomily, "I never attached much importance to it. Only the Mohammedans have accepted the right view of women, while we Europeans take them seriously for some reason or other."

"Then it is not without cause that the English say you have been converted to Islam," Montholon remarked.

"The Moslem religion is unquestionably the best of them all," the Emperor said. "Islam conquered half the world in ten years, while Christianity required three centuries to do as much. It's quite clear the Mussulman faith stands highest."

The Marshal of the Palace, Count Bertrand, said with a subtle smile he had noticed that the religious opinions of the Emperor were changeable, and far from being as simple as they seemed. In words His Majesty often expressed himself in the

spirit of the Catholic faith, but—but——

Napoleon looked with a smile at Bertrand's forehead.

"But—I do not always say what I think. You are quite right, dear Bertrand."

He was silent for a time.

"Of all the notable people whom I have known," Napoleon recommenced, as if with reluctance, "hardly any believed in God. The learned?—A celebrated mathematician once said to me that for him God was quite an unnecessary hypothesis. Monge, Laplace, Arago, Berthollet, were all"—Napoleon involuntarily spoke of everybody in the past tense—"godless. The philosophers? The poets?—In Germany I knew a very remarkable writer. I think he was called Goeth'. Yes, Wolfgang Goeth'. He wrote a long poem about some mediæval necromancer. . . ."

Montholon instantly drew out a notebook and wrote a few words in it, so as to preserve for future generations the name of the German author Goeth' who had written a poem about a mediæval necromancer.

"He was in the service of that fool, Karl

of Weimar, as director of his Court Theatre," Napoleon continued. "A very remarkable man. He resembled a Greek god in body as well as in soul. I am sorry that the only book of his I have ever read is his novel, *Werther*. I think his other books must be remarkable too. Well, and this Goeth' was as godless as our Encyclopædists, but it is true in his own way—perhaps in a clever way too. He called himself a pantheist. Is it not all the same to say that nature is God—or that there is no God? . . . and besides, is all this of such importance? It's a very bad sign when a man begins to think about God: he has evidently nothing more to do on earth. . . ."

He tapped with his fingers on his steel snuff-box, which was shaped like a coffin and bore the device, "Pense à ta fin, elle est près de toi," and then he poured himself out another cup of strong coffee.

"Yes, he was a very remarkable man, that German poet. If he had been a Frenchman, I would have made him a Duke. Him and Corneille."

Bertrand remarked that there were also

sincere believers among celebrated writers, and cited Chateaubriand as an example. Napoleon looked again askance at the Marshal of his Palace. Both this glance and the delighted expression on Montholon's face proved to Bertrand that he had done something tactless.

"I have no occasion," he hastily added, "to inform Your Majesty how I look upon the political activities of Viscount Chateaubriand, but who can deny him exceptional talent?"

Montholon, suppressing a smile of pleasure, and without looking at Bertrand, related an anecdote about Chateaubriand that had been told in Paris. It appeared that Chateaubriand had at one time written a book of a clearly anti-Christian character, and he had taken it to some publisher. The publisher returned the manuscript with the remark that atheism was going out of fashion. Chateaubriand reflected over this matter, and a few months later he went back to the publisher with another book in defence of the Catholic faith. This is the way *Le Génie du Christianisme* was produced; a book which

brought fame to the author, and a fortune to the publisher.

Napoleon laughed a low, pleased laugh; he liked such anecdotes.

"Even if it is not true, it is very like the truth," he said. "I know the Viscount sufficiently well. *Je suis payé pour le connaître.* Both he and Madame de Staël are equally good, each in their own way. There would have been nothing easier than to buy their goodwill. I had but to make Chateaubriand my minister, and Madame de Staël my mistress. But he would have been a very bad minister, and she, as a woman, always appeared repugnant to me. *Ce pauvre Benjamin Constant.* Yes, yes, they are both equally good." And Napoleon laughed again. "He and she. . . . After my return from the island of Elba, she wrote me an enthusiastic letter and offered me her pen at the price of two millions. I found that two millions was too dear for it. I might have given a hundred thousand, as she does not write badly. The pen is an important thing! Writers are not like advocates. The feudal system was destroyed by cannon,

the modern system will be destroyed by the pen. Yes, they are both very good, the liberty-loving Madame de Staël and the sanctimonious Monsieur Chateaubriand!"

He drank his coffee. Madame Bertrand moved the coffee-pot away from him without his noticing it. It appeared to her that the exciting drink affected the Emperor's health.

"So Your Majesty does not believe in God and in a higher righteousness?" the Marshal of the Palace asked in a timid voice.

"I?" Napoleon asked. "If I had believed in God, could I have done what I did? What is God? What is higher righteousness? Almost all scoundrels live happily. You'll see that Talleyrand will die peacefully in his bed."

He frowned and said no more.

Madame Bertrand remarked in a reproachful tone that there is another—a better and a more righteous world.

"I'm not so sure of that. *Quand nous sommes morts, nous sommes bien morts.* . . . It sometimes happened, when I was

out shooting, that I ordered the deer to be opened before me; they are constructed just as we are. Why should we not believe that the soul of the deer is immortal? Besides, life and death are but dreams. *La mort est un sommeil sans rêves, et la vie un songe leger qui se dissipe.* . . . If I wanted to have a belief, I would deify the sun. . . ."

Madame Bertrand did not agree with His Majesty's opinions and said that she firmly believed the Roman Catholic religion was the best and highest on earth.

Napoleon nodded approvingly.

"You are right, Madame. The best thing about the Roman Catholic religion is that the prayers are in Latin: the people understand nothing—and God be thanked for it! In general every man ought to live in the faith of his forefathers. And a woman must firmly believe in it, too. I can't bear free-thinking and learned women. . . . Learned men—that's quite another thing. . . . I must confess that I do not understand how believing cultured Christians can still exist. Now, take Pope Pius VII. He believed in Christ," Napo-

leon said, with astonishment turning to the men. *"Il croyait, mais là, réellement en Jésus-Christ."*

Bertrand and Montholon could not quite understand why it was so astonishing that Pope Pius VII believed in Christ.

"Of course, the Christ of the Gospels never existed," the Emperor explained, in an irritable tone; he liked people to understand his half-words. "There certainly was some sort of Jewish fanatic who imagined himself the Messiah. Similar fanatics are shot all over the world every year. I myself have had occasion to shoot them."

"Oh!" Madame Bertrand cried, with horror.

"Was it cruel?" Napoleon asked. "By nature, I'm not cruel. But the heart of a statesman is in his head. He must be as cold as ice."

"Your Majesty has a very bad opinion of men!"

"Yes, one may say so. *Il faudrait que les hommes fussent bien scélérats pour l'être autant que je le suppose.*"

"But there are honest people."

"Of course there are. *Il y a aussi des fripons assez fripons pour se conduire en honnêtes gens.* He who wishes to rule men must appeal to their vices, but not to their virtues."

There was a moment of silence. Even such a man of the world as Montholon could find no subject for further conversation.

"What would be equally difficult to explain to the believers and to the atheists," Napoleon said suddenly, in a strangely altered voice, "is my life. A few nights ago I remembered that in one of my old school copy-books—I think it was of the year 1788—there is the following entry: 'Sainte Hélène, petite île.' At that time I was preparing for an examination in geography, according to the course of the Abbé Lacroix. . . . I can see the copy-book and that page before my eyes, as if it were here. . . . And after the name of the damned island there is nothing more written in the copy-book. . . . Fate had stayed my hand. . . . Yes, fate had stayed my hand," he repeated almost in a

whisper, with a sudden tone of horror in his voice.

His terrible eyes became larger and seemed to be fixed on something within. He sat long in silence, with his head sunk dejectedly on his breast.

"But if God Almighty has specially occupied Himself with my life," the Emperor said suddenly, in a low voice, and he laughed in a strange way, "then what did He want to say by it? Incomprehensible. . . . Twenty years of contest with the whole world—and to finish the contest with Sir Hudson Lowe. . . . *Oui, quel rêve, quel rêve que ma vie!*" he repeated.

"The ways of God are inscrutable!" Count Bertrand said, after a long silence.

Napoleon raised his head and gazed with steadfast eyes for a long time at the Marshal of his Palace.

"I will not detain you any longer, gentlemen," he said at last.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Vizier, a small old Arab horse, a present from the Sultan of Turkey, was standing before the porch, pawing the ground with his hoof, not from excess of boldness, but from the habit of long years—to show his good manners, and that he knew what ought to be done. The coachman, Archambaud, and the groom, Novarraz, were holding him by the bridle.

The Emperor, in the uniform of the Chasseurs of the Guard, treading heavily in his Hessian boots and clinking spurs, slowly descended the stairs. Over his uniform he wore a sort of grey cloak that resembled a waterproof.

"La redingote grise," Archambaud whispered.

Following Napoleon, and keeping pace with him, was his devoted general.

Vizier neighed from propriety, reared

slightly, and switched his short tail over his haunch, which was branded with a crown and the letter N.

"Does Your Majesty wish to go far?" the general asked respectfully.

"First to Dead Wood, and then somewhere else," Napoleon answered negligently.

Suddenly he felt amused: the devoted general always accompanied the Emperor wherever he went—even when the latter visited his wife.

Smiling amiably, Napoleon wished a good evening to the devoted general, and taking the reins in his left hand, with his accustomed movement, he placed his foot in the broad stirrup of the velvet, gold-embroidered saddle.

Suddenly a terrible pain in his right side almost made him cry out. The Emperor's face became paler than usual. He staggered, and the reins fell from his hand.

The *razor* had pierced him again. Death was there!

With an extraordinary effort of will, he tried three times to mount his horse, and thrice his fainting body refused to obey.

His old servants, Archambaud and Novarraz, turned their eyes away. The Emperor Napoleon could not mount his horse.

The general, restraining his agitation, respectfully requested His Majesty to give up his ride: it was evident His Majesty was unwell.

"You are right. . . . I had better take a stroll," Napoleon said, in a dull voice.

Archambaud touched the horse quietly. Vizier turned his shapely head, shook his grey mane, looked round, and neighed with surprise. He was led back to the stable.

Napoleon slowly went up a small mound, from which the sea could be seen. The setting sun cast a torrent of blood-red and golden light on the waves, and in place of its light, as is usual to those latitudes, the moon and stars appeared at once. The Emperor gazed at the sky; he was searching for his star. . . . There was nothing more to be looked for on earth.

On the sea, in the far distance, a vessel was slowly sailing away. She was bound for France.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

On that vessel the young married couple, the De Balmains, were sailing away to Russia. Count Alexander Antonovich, looking rather glum, was seated in the empty ward-room. By the light of a candle he was looking through a parcel of Russian books that had been sent to him by Rzhevsky. They were mostly old publications of Novikov's.

"Of Error and Truth, or an appeal to the human race for the universal foundation of learning. A work which exposes to the notables the doubtfulness of their investigations and their constant errors, pointing out at the same time the path along which they ought to proceed to attain physical evidence of the origin of good and evil, of man, of material nature, of immaterial nature, and of saintly nature, of the foundations of political gov-

ernment, of the power of kings, of the laws both civil and criminal, of science, of languages, and of the fine arts. . . ."

"Is that not too much?" De Balmain thought.

"An Unknown Philosopher. Translated from the French. Published by the Typographical Society, Moscow. Printed in the free Printing Press of I. Lopukhin, with the obligatory permission, 1785."

"This is a translation. I'd better read it in the original."

And the Count put Saint-Martin's big volume to one side, and began to examine the other books.

"The Chemical Psalter, or the rules appertaining to the philosophers' stone. . . ."

"Chrysomander, an allegorical and satirical romance treating of varied and interesting subjects. . . ."

"I shall read this work first. It seems to be the lightest of the lot."

"Brotherly Admonitions. . . . "

"Krata Repoa, or the description of the initiations into the mysteries of the orders of Egyptian priests."

De Balmain sighed and opened one of the books at random.

"The ancient sages, when writing about the philosopher's stone, mention salt, sulphur, and mercury. The chemists, not understanding their enigmatic and emblematic expressions, and not having cognizance of philosophical salt, sulphur, and mercury, work without reflection, at a venture, and instead of a pile of gold and a universal panacea, they produce for themselves trembling limbs and a beggarly sum. . . ."

"Is it possible that Rzhevsky reads this?" the Count asked himself, suppressing a yawn, as he turned over several pages.

"Read, my brothers, read the Holy Word, read its progressive inferences; read it with the clear inner eye of the wise men, who have their eyes in their heads as the all-wise Solomon said. Read it without haste, not as the greater number of readers, who only hurry to get to the next page. If you read this page improperly, you cannot expect to obtain profit

from the next unless you look back; so read carefully, and from the beginning. If you wish to read the history of the creation, then stick to the first verse: *'Bereshith bara Elohim eth haskamayim we eth ha arets.'* Read it for several years, and only then read further."

"Mais il se moque de moi, le bonhomme," Alexander Antonovich exclaimed and, suddenly getting angry, he threw the book away and began to pace about the small ward-room.

"If you go on reading such works, you're sure to go mad, and you will also look at your navel like Speransky, expecting a light from Thebes. Rzhevsky was always a fool, and he has grown no wiser since he left the Cadet Corps. . . . I'm not much better. . . . As soon as I get to Paris, I shall look for Krivtsev at Vefours. He is sure to be in the Palais Royal. Let him tell me if I have gone mad on that island, or if he has lost his senses in Petersburg. . . . I shall also find Lucie. . . . May they all go to the devil together!"

Count de Balmain did up the books in

a parcel, touching them with a certain amount of fear, and then he went on deck to breathe the fresh sea-air.

In the cabin that had been assigned to the Russian commissioner, Susie was lying in her berth with her head buried in the pillow, crying bitterly.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Doctor Antommarchi, the physican attached to Napoleon's person, a badly educated and very stupid young man, was firmly convinced that the Emperor's illness bore a political character. The free and easy smile with which Antommarchi spoke about his illness caused Napoleon to lose his temper. The Emperor, who had never believed in doctors, pertinaciously refused the aid of the Italian physician.

"I threw out of the window the medicines that were ordered me by the doctors Corvisart and Larrey, the best physicians in the world," he replied to the entreaties of those who surrounded him. "How can you expect me to take the physic ordered by this boy-vet?"

But in the spring of the year 1821, the Emperor's appearance showed clearly, even to Antommarchi, that the disease was

assuming a very dangerous character. The doctor became afraid of the responsibility and, wishing to have a consultation with the English doctors, he tried by his eloquence to persuade his patient to consent to see them.

"I believe, my good sir, I am not bound to give you an account of myself," Napoleon said sharply. "Do you not think life can be a burden to me? I will not try to hasten the approach of death; but I will do nothing to retard it."

He made only one disposition in the event of his death: he instructed that his body should be opened in order to investigate the nature of this hereditary malady, for the benefit of his son at some future time.

The Emperor ceased almost entirely to leave his room. He passed most of the day in his bath, or lying on the sofa in a half-darkened room, vainly trying to warm his cold feet with hot fomentations. His features grew thin and drawn, and his small and beautiful hands became emaciated. All understood that Napoleon was dying.

One evening Bertrand, hoping to divert the Emperor's thoughts, proposed that he should go into the garden, as the Englishmen had said that a comet could be seen in the sky, and now on this clear night it would be easy to see it.

"What? A comet?" Napoleon cried, and hastened into the garden.

"Before the death of Julius Cæsar, there was also a comet," he said quietly, when he re-entered the room, with his Marshal of the Palace, and again sank down on his sofa.

Bertrand involuntarily made a gesture of surprise.

"Is it possible that His Majesty supposes the phenomena of the sky have a connection with his person?" he asked himself, in perplexity.

Shortly after this, Napoleon began in great haste to occupy himself with the making of his will. This occupation interested him so much that he was even in a good humour. He worked at it for several days, occasionally ordering Homer to be read to him while he rested.

The will was soon ready.

"It would be a pity not to die, now that I have put all my affairs in order so admirably," he said to his favourite young valet, Marchand, when he had finished this work; and at the same moment he thought this phrase, that had quite accidentally entered his mind, would be recorded in history, as Marchand would certainly write it down at once.

"Now listen, my dear boy," he added. "I have left you five hundred thousand francs, but my money is far away in France. God knows when you will receive it. Take this in the meantime. . . ."

And he took a diamond necklace out of a box.

"It is worth two hundred thousand. I will give it to you. Put it away. Go!" And checking, with a fastidious, deprecatory gesture, his valet's expressions of gratitude, and his attempts to kiss his hand, Napoleon ordered the general to be summoned with whose wife he was on intimate terms.

"I have left you by my will . . ."—and with a strange smile on his lips, he men-

tioned an enormous sum. "But perhaps you want more?"

The general, bowing respectfully, replied it was not money that he valued, but the favours of the Emperor who, he sincerely hoped, would have a long life before him.

Napoleon's smile became still more strange.

"In this manner I have marked for posterity and for all time your disinterested and devoted services," he said slowly.

Again there appeared on his face an expression of fastidiousness. He fell into a doze.

About the middle of April, the Emperor sent for his confessor, the Abbé Vignale, and talked with him a long time about the religious ceremonies he desired at his funeral. He expressed the wish that all the usual rites that are customary for the most devout people, according to the prescriptions of the Roman Catholic Church, should be performed over his coffin. The Abbé, who was delighted, suggested to His Majesty that he might like to confess. But with a slight smile Napoleon declined this proposal for the moment.

The pious and agitated Abbé Vignale mentally thanked the Almighty for having at last brought back into the fold of the true, eternal, and only Faith, this rebellious human soul. When he departed, the Abbé left on the Emperor's table, as if by chance, a Holy Bible.

In the evening, when Montholon and Bertrand entered Napoleon's room, they found him lying on the sofa reading a thick book. The Emperor's shoulders were shaking slightly. Montholon looked from a respectful distance into the book. It was the Pentateuch.

"Moses," Napoleon said with animation, looking at the generals, and restraining his laughter, "what a cute man he was, eh? Moses really was a cute man!"

It involuntarily appeared to the generals that the Emperor, who had spoken so piously only the day before with the Abbé Vignale, neither believed in God nor the devil: in his opinion there was just as little holiness in heaven as on earth.

Count Bertrand began to read aloud to the Emperor the English newspapers that had just arrived. In one of them there

was a sharp article against those people who had been guilty of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien. Suddenly, while he was reading, he felt himself nudged in the side by Montholon. The Marshal of the Palace raised his eyes, and noticed with horror that there was a terrible expression on the Emperor's face. He had seen such an expression on His Majesty's face only two or three times during the last twenty years. The last time he had seen it was after the Battle of Waterloo, when, with a slight hysterical laugh, Napoleon had said to those surrounding him:

"All is finished. . . . All is lost. . . ."

It appeared to Bertrand that His Majesty was about to have an epileptic attack.

"My will . . . give me my will."

Montholon rushed to get the will. The Emperor opened the packet with trembling fingers and, without saying a word, added several lines to the last and eighth paragraph of the first section:

"I ordered the arrest and trial of the Duc d'Enghien because it was necessary for the safety, the welfare, and the honour of the

French nation; at that time, by his own confession, the Comte d'Artois was keeping in Paris sixty hired murderers. In similar circumstances I would act in the same way now. . . ."

* *
*

The generals left the Emperor's study greatly depressed. It was already late. Marchand prepared the Emperor's two beds and helped him to undress. While doing so, the valet noticed that His Majesty had high fever.

The bath was ready. The Emperor plunged into the hot water and frowned when his shoulders touched the cold zinc. His feet got warmer, and his thoughts became less dark.

He was ashamed that now, but a few days before his death, such a trifle as an article in a newspaper should have angered him in that way. But why was it that out of the thousand crimes he had committed, stupid, dull-witted people continued to cast up before his eyes always one and the same thing: the case of this unfortunate Duc d'Enghien? Two million

people had perished owing to his will, and those English fools think that he can, and must, be sorry for this one man, because this man, who was executed by his, Napoleon's order, happened to be a prince of the royal blood. There's no other reason. . . . Slaves!

He wrathfully closed and locked the compartment of his brain concerning the Duc d'Enghien, and opened another, in which were thoughts of death. But here, during the last few months, all had been well studied, thought over, and ransacked to its very rudiments. Napoleon knew that he would die in a few days, that he would die completely, and he would have no other life, and if there was another, that other life was not wanted by him, and it was quite uninteresting to him. None of the philosophers could tell him anything new about it, because he knew life better than any philosopher. And even the tired king of Israel, who had died three thousand years ago, and had bequeathed to wise people a few really wise thoughts on life and death, had not had the experience he had had. As that king had been born

heir to a throne, he had never conquered the world, he had never looked into the face of death on sixty fields of battle, and he had probably not known the greatest of human joys—war and victory. . . .

Napoleon suddenly remembered Toulon, where for the first time he had experienced that greatest happiness of life. . . . The battery of the *Sans-culottes* and the Convention on which he had passed long sleepless nights thinking out a plan for the storming of the fortress. . . . The blasts of wind blowing from the sea on to the battery. . . . The scent of tar near the old chapel. . . .

How living, clear, and sweet were these recollections of his distant youth!

In the Emperor's mind arose the grey fort of the Eguillette—it was in it that he had then found the key to the impregnable fortress. . . . The meeting of the military council when he, an unknown young artillery officer, pointing out this position on the map with a blow of his hand, had said with confidence and decision, "Toulon is here!" . . . The incapable, gold-bedizened General Carteaux, who had not understood

his words, had begun to laugh at the ignorance of the young officer who mistook the Eguillette for Toulon, and the clever old woman, Carteaux's wife, who had repeatedly said to her husband, "Laisse faire ce jeune homme, il en sait plus que toi." And Barras's self-satisfied figure. . . . The storming of the fortress. . . . His first wound—the mark could still be seen on his old body. . . . The burning of the town. . . . The executions. . . . Oh, could he only feel, if but once more, that joy, that happiness, that excitement, and that pain! . . .

A dark grey rat ran out from under the bath with a great noise.

Napoleon shivered and got out of the water and went into his study, treading heavily. He raised the pillows, and got into bed with slight difficulty. In a short time, notwithstanding the terrible pain, he was in a doze. But the Emperor's sleep was not tranquil. The fever increased, the blood rose to his head, and the cloud grew more terrible on Napoleon's terrible face.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

He had a frightful dream. He dreamed that the enormous army of an enemy, passing through Belgium by the undefended plains round Charleroi, was pouring like an avalanche into France. The horror of an enemy invasion and all those things which he himself had done so often in foreign countries, appeared clearly to his mind. France—France in the abstract—was, with the exception of war, the only thing Napoleon had loved during his whole life. The Emperor's dying brain began to work again with the delirium of fever. He must repulse the invader. The National Guard must be called to arms. The whole nation must be summoned to defend their country. Paris, on which the enemy was irresistibly advancing, must be saved. Complicated strategic combinations began to form themselves in Napoleon's mind.

There are favourable positions on the banks of the Marne. The Verdun fortress would be able to prevent an outflanking movement of the enemy. But to whom, to whom could he confide the defence of the country? Which of the French generals would understand what must be done? Desaix? Kléber? Pichegru? Lannes? Bessières? Duroc? Berthier? Ney? Murat?

Suddenly, as if he had received an electric shock, the Emperor raised his head from the pillow. His memory returned to him for a moment. None of those commanders was still alive! An evil destiny hung over all his old comrades in arms. Desaix had fallen on the field of Marengo; Bessières was killed at Lützen; on the banks of the Danube a bomb had torn off Lannes's legs; Duroc had been blown to pieces at Mackersdorf; Kléber had been stabbed in Egypt; Berthier had thrown himself out of the window; Murat had been shot in Naples; Ney had been executed in Paris; in his own, in Napoleon's dungeons, the traitor Pichegru had strangled himself—it were better not to remem-

ber that. It was in this general that young Bonaparte, who was striving for the throne, had at one time seen his most serious military rival.

And now he himself had but a few days to live! Not a minute must be lost. There was nobody else who could save France.

A cold sweat appeared on the Emperor's brow. With a trembling hand he lit a candle; he wanted to ring, but he could not find his brass bell. Supporting himself now by the bed, then by the wall or the table, he put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and went to Montholon's room.

During the whole of his long life, Count Charles Tristan de Montholon could never forget the moment when, waking from a severe push on the shoulder, he stretched himself, opened his eyes, blinked several times at the shaking light—and was astounded. The dying Emperor, holding a candle, from which the melting wax dripped on to the floor, in his trembling hand, was standing before him. His face was distorted—his eyes shone with an insane fire.

"Get up—dress—and follow me," Napoleon ordered in broken accents.

Trembling in every limb, the general obeyed. They went into the study.

"Write."

The room, lighted only by a single candle, was dark and cold. An unaccountable and deadly terror seized Count Montholon.

"Your Majesty," he said, with chattering teeth, "permit me to call Doctor Antommarchi."

"Write!" Napoleon cried, in a painful, hoarse voice.

Montholon, taking pen and paper, began to write. The pen obeyed him but badly. In his delirium, holding his hand pressed to his side, with flashing, insane eyes, the Emperor dictated a plan for the defence of France from an imaginary invasion.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

On the fifth of May a terrible storm burst over Saint Helena. The roaring waves cast themselves on the inaccessible rocky cliffs of the accursed island. The thin walls of the house at Longwood shook. The copper-coloured, ominous hills grew dark. The stunted trees that sadly tried to cover the nakedness of the volcanic rocks were torn up by the wind, and rolled heavily down the deep precipices, catching at the rocks with their branches as they fell.

Although Doctor Antommarchi walked bravely about the rooms of Villa Longwood, in his usual free and easy manner, with the air of a man who had foreseen everything and therefore had nothing to fear, it was quite evident that in his opinion the patient had arrived at his last minutes. It appeared to be quite nat-

ural that Napoleon's stormy spirit should depart to another world in such weather; in the midst of loud peals of thunder, the howlings of winds, and the flashes of tropical lightning.

But he who had been the Emperor took no further heed of anything. Napoleon's groaning body did not easily release his spirit. The rolling of the thunder appeared to his congealing brain to be the sound of cannonades, and his lips whispered indistinctly the last words:

"Army—— Van-guard!"

Sitting in an arm-chair near the bed was General Bertrand, with red eyes steadfastly fixed on the dying man. Count Montholon was writing in a notebook each sound that had the slightest semblance of a word that escaped the Emperor's lips. About a dozen Frenchmen were crowded in the study and near the doorway, awaiting the last sigh. In the adjoining room the Abbé Vignale was preparing the candles.

At five forty-nine P.M. Doctor Antommarchi came quickly up to the bed. He put his ear to Napoleon's heart, and then

spread his arms sadly to show that even he could do no more.

Sobs could be heard. Count Bertrand, rising with difficulty from his chair, said in a hoarse whisper,

"The Emperor is dead!"

And suddenly, when he looked on the face of the dead man, he staggered back, struck by old recollections.

"The First Consul!" the Marshal of the Palace exclaimed.

Lying on the pillow radiant with inanimate beauty was the head of General Bonaparte, which death had rejuvenated by twenty years.

The English officer who was on duty at Villa Longwood went out on the porch with a face altered by emotion. The storm was abating. The peals of thunder were heard more rarely. The officer shivered; he wrapped himself up in his cloak and went to the signal-mast.

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Some hours passed. From all sides carriages and riders arrived at the door of

the house; from all sides the inhabitants came whispering together. The house was soon filled with military, who looked at everything with curiosity and dread.

The valet, Marchand, opened wide the door of the study. The Marshal of the Palace, General Bertrand, entered the room, carrying high above his head some sort of blue garment with a red collar embroidered with silver.

"The overcoat the Emperor wore at Marengo!" he announced with a trembling voice, as he laid it over Napoleon's dead body.

Not one of the military men could stand by unmoved. The Frenchmen, beginning with the old Marshal of the Palace, burst into tears like little children. The English officers took out their pocket-handkerchiefs and raised them to their eyes as if at the word of command. They experienced a feeling of awe at the death of so great a man. It is true he was the enemy of the Dear Old Country, but, all the same, he was the greatest man in the world, compared to whom the lives of ordinary men such as themselves were worthless. They

had a feeling of awe also because there, in England, nobody knew anything about it as yet, and each officer was eager to write a letter to somebody in the Dear Old Country. One of the officers approached the bed and, bending down, kissed the hem of the Emperor's overcoat; the others followed his example.

The French commissioner, De Montchenu, entered the room with the greatly agitated Governor. The Marquis, who had hated Napoleon for thirty years, had never seen him alive. He went up to the bed and stood there a long time, looking at the dead face with its closed eyes.

"Who has the will?" he asked the Marshal of the Palace, in a low voice, as he retired.

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The Abbé Vignale refused to leave the body till the moment of its burial. He was calmer than any of the others: to him, as a Roman Catholic priest, death meant something different than to frivolous, worldly people. The Abbé went up to the

sideboard in the dining-room unobserved, ate the wing of a pheasant, drank half a glass of wine, and then returned to the study, where the remains of the Emperor were lying.

All the strangers had left the room. The Abbé took up his own Bible from the table, where he had purposely left it a few days before—the book was lying open—and he began to read in a low voice, reverently moving his lips:

"All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

"This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all; yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

"For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have

they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

"Also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun.

"I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to the men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

Abbé Vignale sighed deeply, settled himself more comfortably in his arm-chair, and turned the page.

". . . While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

"While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain;

"In the days when the keepers of the house shall tremble and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the

voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

"Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets;

"Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern . . ."

The Abbé sighed again and glanced sideways at the corpse of the Emperor. The faint light of the wax-candles shone on the shoulder-straps of the overcoat worn at Marengo.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Toby, the old Malay, was very much alarmed when he heard the sound of the volleys. Moving his legs with difficulty, he went up to one of the cooks, a man he knew, a very kind fellow who had never done him any wrong, and asked him what had happened: why were they firing? where had the Rajah of the island gone, and where were all the people going.

The cook looked at him with surprise.

"What has happened? Why are they firing?" he asked. "They are burying Napoleon. His body has now been brought to the geranium valley. I have just come from there—dinner must be prepared, I would otherwise never have come away. There are thousands of people there—the whole island, and troops. . . . Run quickly to see it! Our battery will fire the salute."

But the very old Malay was losing his memory. He had forgotten the name of the

green general who had once given him twenty gold coins, and he asked timidly who the deceased Rajah had been.

"My good fellow, it is evident you have lost your senses," the cook answered. "Don't you know who Napoleon Bonaparte was? Why, he conquered the whole world, he killed thousands of people—is it possible you don't know him? He conquered all the nations of the world, except us Britishers. . . . Well, good-bye, I've no time to gossip with you."

The Malay raised his shoulders, munched with his toothless jaws, and tried to look as if he had understood. But in his soul he laughed at the cook's ignorance; he evidently was muddling things: as the great and terrible Rajah Seri-Tri-Buvana, the Djangdy of the kingdom of Menangkabou, the conqueror of the Rajahs, the Lampongese, the Bataks, the Dyaks, the Sundanese, the Mankasars, the Buginese, and the Alfurs, had died very long ago, many years ago, long before Toby's father, or his father's father had been born: may they be fed with cakes for the crocodile's sake, by the shaker of the earth, Taty, and the god of heaven, Ru!